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FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

The Goddess That Failed
Olivia Vlahos

Historians and the Reality of Christ
Avery Dulles

Messianic Jews: A Troubling Presence
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The Electoral Uses and Abuses of Religion
The Editors

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Alan Jacobs on Friendship • George A. Tobin • John E. Coons
James Turner • Steven B. Smith • George Weigel
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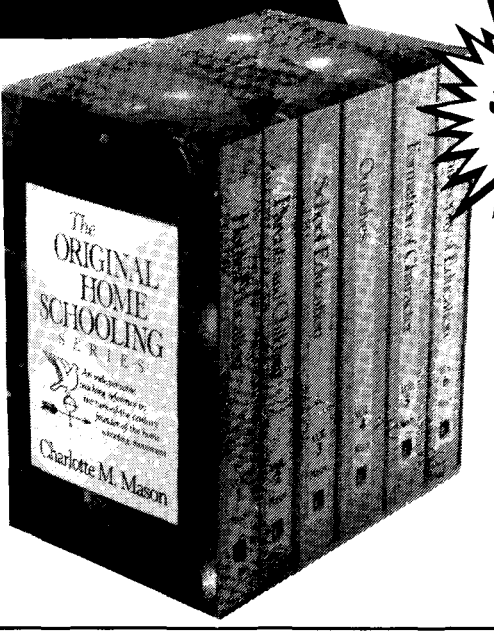

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FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

DECEMBER 1992 • NUMBER 28

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FIRST THINGS

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Pluralism, Nay & Yea

From S. Mark Heim's discussion of "Pluralism and the Otherness of World Religions" (August/September) I get the impression that today's Christianity has little to do with God. It seems to be more interested and active in such trendy cultural issues as liberation theology, social justice, feminism, gays, singles, and politics. It is floundering in an ocean of unfocused babble that has nothing to do with the meeting of humanity with Divinity. Christianity may soon be replaced by those with whom it is attempting to be inclusive.

Everett King
Lansing, IL

S. Mark Heim's gentle critique of pluralistic theologies is certainly thought-provoking, but also is terribly abstract. Meanwhile, in the real world out there, Muslims are being murdered by Christians in Bosnia, Christians are being murdered by Muslims in the Sudan, and Bahais are being murdered by Muslims in Iran, not to mention the mutual slaughter that has been going on for so many years among the various religions in India.

For the vast majority of true believers in any faith, religious truth is what they have been taught to believe from an early age. Yet, sadly, it seems not to occur to many such persons that had they, by accident of birth, been reared in a different faith culture they might well believe just as passionately in a different "one true faith" that today is totally alien to them.

A powerful case can be made that there is indeed validity, as well as possible error, in all religious traditions. The eminent theologian Paul Tillich alluded to what he called the Protestant Principle, i.e., the possibility that any of us may be wrong in interpreting the word and the will of God. If that is so, then we should all be more disposed toward humility rather than triumphalism. As I am sure Prof. Heim would agree, the cherished values of religious liberty and freedom of conscience for each of us must be defended by all of us against never-ending onslaughts.

Samuel Rabinove
Legal Director
American Jewish Committee
New York, NY

The Abortion Wars

Justice Scalia was quite right to analogize the Supreme Court's *Dred Scott* and *Casey* decisions ("Abortion and a Nation at War," October), in that the question in each case was not resolved by the decision. But does he or FIRST THINGS think the abortion question would die if *Roe v. Wade* were thrown out? If *Dred Scott* had gone against the South, do you think it would not have seceded?

You demonize those who disagree with you by labeling them with "license" and "private satisfaction," and attaching "communal" and "familial responsibility" to yourselves. Worse, the currently much-abused term "elitist" is meaningless. Clearly you and your readers aren't "populists," else you couldn't produce FIRST THINGS or sell it.

The logic of each side of the abortion question leads to a conclusion unacceptable to modern society: either to the edge of infanticide or to a scenario in which a teenage rape victim's parents must explain to her that she must bear the child of her violator. The flaw is in the premise: that the fetus becomes human only at some instant—viability (or perhaps later) for the pro-choicer, conception (or perhaps earlier) for the pro-lifer. Your arguments for the humanity of the fetus could be extended to an *in vitro* fertilized ovum, to a sperm cell, to a blood cell. If depriving a fetus of life is wrong, why isn't prevention of its conception? Such single-minded pursuit of an arbitrary premise leads some to promulgate animal rights and others to genocide.

Even if the South had been allowed to secede, slavery was doomed. The same, unfortunately, cannot be said of abortion. Apart from the activism

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of those who want absolutely no abortion, *Roe v. Wade* has worked. If the "culture wars" worsen—and I'm sure we all hope they don't—pro-lifers will bear the blame. Abortion abolitionists, unlike slavery abolitionists, will lose, as will we all.

Robert F. White
Media, PA

Pro-lifers should beware of the syllogism: "A fetus is human, a fetus is living, therefore a fetus is a living human being." This commits at least three fallacies: equivocation (on the term "human"), begging the question (asserting what needs to be proven), and composition. The latter can be illustrated thusly: "That dog is Socrates' (dog), that dog is a mother, therefore that dog is Socrates' mother."

The problem with the generic term "human" is that there is no agreement on its meaning. Is human cancer "human"? Is it living? A fetus is a growth attached to a woman's insides. It is a parasitic growth. It is life-draining and life-threatening. If it is attached there against the woman's will, or under duress, coercion, or fraud . . . the woman alone must decide what is to be done. If killing results, it's in self-defense. Bystanders should stop beating up on the only person competent to make this painful decision. Remember Jesus' attitude toward the woman caught in the act of adultery? It was one of understanding and compassion, not condemnation. Go and do likewise.

John B. Goodwin
Sisters, OR

Trials of Ecumenism

In "A Closed Question and Ecumenism Now" (Public Square, October), Richard John Neuhaus asserts: "Mainly because of the fragmented condition of Orthodoxy itself, the healing of the millennium-old breach between Rome and the East will not likely happen anytime soon." The statement is simply false, on two counts.

First, the condition of Orthodoxy is not "fragmented." During the past year in particular, two events, epoch-making in their importance, and of great significance to Christians of all confessions, have strengthened the unity of Orthodox Churches to a degree unprecedented in modern history. It is deeply unfortunate that First Things has chosen largely to ignore these extraordinary achievements.

(1) A schism of over fifteen hundred years between the Orthodox Church and what are sometimes called the "Oriental Orthodox Churches" has been resolved in principle. All issues of disagreement have been settled between the Chalcedonian (that is, those churches which accepted the pronouncements of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, held in Chalcedon in A.D. 451) and non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches.

The non-Chalcedonian Churches are the Coptic Church of Egypt, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Ethiopian Church, the Church of India, and the Syrian Orthodox Church. Their combined membership is approximately 30 million. The resumption of full intercommunion between these Churches is imminent.

To place this event in perspective, one need only recall that the reformed churches have existed for only approximately 450 years, and the Roman Catholic Church (as contrasted with the Church of Rome) cannot be said to have existed before 1054.

(2) In March of this year, the Primates of all fourteen Orthodox Churches, or their representatives, met for three days at the headquarters of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul, Turkey. This meeting is unprecedented in modern history.

Fr. Neuhaus' statement is also false in regard to the cause of the continued separation of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The principle points of Orthodox disagreement with the Roman Catholic Church are two: the alleged magisterial and jurisdictional primacy of the Pope; and the existence of the "Uniate" Churches, along with the continued Roman Catholic proselytism among Orthodox Christians.

The Orthodox insist that any canonical resolution of the Schism must include a return to the condition of ecclesial unity that existed prior to the Great Schism of 1054 when the Church of Rome was in communion and full doctrinal agreement with all the *other* Orthodox Churches. The Bishop of Rome was regarded by all other bishops of the Church as "first among equals," not on account of any alleged jurisdictional supremacy accruing to the See of Peter, but in respect to the antiquity and greatness of the city of Rome, the first capital of the empire. . . .

For the Orthodox, the acceptable solution is communion *with*, and not *under*, Rome. The unity of the Church from Her very beginning has been a unity of faith, not of obedience to a Supreme Pontiff. Indeed, prior to the Great Schism, there was no Pope in the modern sense.

The Uniate problem, however, is the more immediately pressing of the two. The "Uniate," or "Eastern Rite Catholic," Churches are in communion with Rome, but follow the same Eastern or Byzantine liturgical forms used by the Orthodox. Uniate Churches exist in Ukraine, Romania, East Slovakia, the Middle East, and elsewhere.

The Uniate Churches originated in the sixteenth century, as a result of proselytizing by the Jesuits among the Orthodox Christians in Poland. The ultimate purpose of the Jesuits was to force the Orthodox hierarchy in Poland to submit to the Pope. The plan failed; but the Eastern Rite Catholic Church eventually spread to other parts of Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The genesis and continued existence of Uniate Churches are, from Orthodox perspective, intended solely for the purpose of converting Orthodox Christians to Roman Catholicism, an act that the Orthodox regard as hostile.

Although Vatican II declared the Orthodox Church a "sister church" to Rome, the Orthodox believe that recent decisions and actions by the

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Roman Catholics pertaining to the Uniate Churches contravene their professions of the "sisterhood" of the two Churches, being motivated instead by a policy of proselytization and expansion in traditionally Orthodox lands. The Orthodox Churches have united to suspend further dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church on all other issues until a satisfactory solution of the problem is obtained.

Scott R. Stripling
North Andover, MA

It is difficult to determine the real point of Richard John Neuhaus' "A Closed Question and Ecumenism Now." On the one hand he seems to say that the position of Anglicans and Lutherans on the ordination of women has doomed the ecumenical movement to failure. On the other hand he states that "ecumenism is integral to Christian existence" and that "those observers may turn out to be wrong who say that the decision of oldline Protestantism to declare women's ordination a closed question is the end of progress toward full communion."

Obviously the [existence] of church-dividing and irreconcilable differences would preclude the possibility of entering into full communion. But the purpose of ecumenical dialogue is to determine which differences are truly church-dividing, whether or not they are irreconcilable, and whether or not those concerned are willing to do what is necessary to resolve church-dividing irreconcilable positions. Relentlessly pursuing the objectives of ecumenical dialogue may lead to surprising results despite what appear to be insurmountable obstacles.

(The Rev.) Jude D. Weisenbeck
Office of Ecumenism
Archdiocese of Louisville

Catholics and Development

FIRST THINGS' "treatment" of the Campaign For Human Development (CHD), "Left Over from the Sixties" (Public Square, August/September), contains misinformation that cannot go unchallenged. A more careful analysis of the record reveals the following:

1. Contrary to the assertion about the Campaign's fundraising, the CHD appeal has exceeded twelve million dollars annually. Recent growth, while admittedly somewhat modest, has been steady.

2. It is true that CHD funding criteria give high-priority consideration to projects that "work to bring about institutional change." This reflects the insight of the bishops who established the program more than twenty years ago. They acknowledged the significant resources that were already available for direct service programs, through Catholic Charities and other agencies, for example. At the same time, they noted a need for funds to support projects working to get at root causes of poverty. At the heart of CHD's criteria are the principle of participation and the policy of empowerment. FIRST THINGS seems to be unaware of these very important criteria, which are at the heart of Catholic social teaching.

FIRST THINGS concludes that changing times call for "the bishops to reevaluate a program based upon the ideological certitudes of an earlier era." This is precisely what occurred in 1986-87, and it resulted in a near-unanimous reaffirmation of CHD's program and funding criteria by the body of bishops at their November 1988 General Meeting.

The Campaign's program and methodology have enjoyed the strong support of our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, and the U.S. Catholic bishops, who singled out CHD by name in their 1986 pastoral message, *Economic Justice For All.*

3. CHD's philosophy and practice is to help people help themselves — through its support of community-based, self-help projects. That message is simple, direct, and unambiguous. It is the basis for the fundraising appeal to Catholic parishioners on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. CHD subscribes to the highest standards of truth in advertising. . . .

Most Rev. Joseph A. Fiorenza
Bishop of Galveston-Houston
Chairman, USCC CHD Committee

Richard John Neuhaus replies:
The only thing that could conceivably qualify as "misinformation" in the commentary on CHD was the statement that it raises "about ten million dollars per year." I wish I could say that I am pleased to learn that it has raised $12 million. As stated in the article, CHD is, perhaps inadvertently, presented to the Catholic people as supporting the Church's ministry among the poor. In fact, as stipulated in its own guidelines, CHD only supports non-Church projects. Such projects are typically of a social activist mode that was accurately described as "left over from the sixties." Bishop Fiorenza is responsible for the oversight of CHD and one can appreciate his effort to defend the program.

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FIRST THINGS
DECEMBER 1992

The Electoral Uses and Abuses of Religion

Like millions of other Americans we cringed more than once at the God-talk of Pat Robertson, Pat Buchanan, and others at the Republican convention and in the subsequent campaign. President Bush was little better with his public complaint that the Democratic platform omitted "three simple letters: G.O.D." We have commented before on Bush's extraordinary ineptitude when discussing religion (see Public Square, August/September). But then, why should he break his pattern by being more rhetorically adept on that subject?

As galling as one side's occasionally reckless and vulgar invocations of the sacred were the other side's patently partisan protests against religious language in the political arena. The National Council of Churches (NCC) sent forth a statement, solemnly opining that "it is blasphemy to invoke the infinite and holy God to assert the moral superiority of one people over another or one political party over another." This from an institution that, over the last three decades, has issued hundreds of statements on domestic and international matters, routinely pronouncing God's blessing upon its favored causes and God's curse upon policies it does not like. Not that we are in principle opposed to blessings and curses. While nobody has a monopoly on virtue, it is not blasphemy to suggest that some people, some patterns of behavior, and maybe even some party platforms are more in accord with God's will than others. Not to put too fine a point on it, some actions and attitudes are evil, and should be called such.

At least as a general proposition, we are prepared to suggest, for instance, that the faithfully married are morally superior to rapists. And that loving parents are morally superior to abortionists and their political collaborators. As for political parties, it does seem that the Republicans of 1860 had a distinct moral edge over their opponents on the question of slavery. So today, the Republicans have the clear moral edge when it comes to the protection of the unborn and others who cannot assert their own right to life. One might even, like Lincoln, invoke "the infinite and holy God" in support of that claim. (To be sure, the modesty and nuance of Lincoln's invocations is the exception in our political history. But then, his modesty and nuance on almost everything was exceptional.)

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs (BJC)—which is more like a rump committee than a joint committee since the withdrawal of the Southern Baptist Convention—also issued a harsh judgment on Republicans in the name of a presumably nonjudgmental God. "We begin with the proposition that God is neither Democrat nor Republican," declared the committee, and went on to make clear that the BJC, if not God, is decidedly more Democrat than Republican. The devoutly leftist People for the American Way (PAW) got into the act with a statement signed by a select group of clergy asserting that "God is neither Republican nor a Democrat." (Folks at BJC and PAW have been known to talk with one another.) But these statements were as nothing compared with the frenzy of the general press in railing against "the religious right" in Republican ranks. Any allusion to religion does seem to induce severe emotional disorder among those who deem themselves to be the cultural elite (but countenance being termed the cultural elite only by themselves and their friends, never by the likes of Dan Quayle).

The same objections are not usually raised to religion employed on the right side, meaning the left side. At the Democratic Convention and in the prestige media, Jesse Jackson's telling of the nativity story in a manner critical of those who would have censured Mary for aborting Jesus raised nary an eyebrow. Yet reporters and columnists were

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relentless—almost possessed, it seemed at times—in assaulting "the religious right" wherever they encountered the language that most Americans speak when the subject turns to rights and wrongs. Americans are and always have been an incorrigibly and confusedly religious people. As Tocqueville and many others have tried to explain, religion is the source of moral discourse and moral formation for most Americans. As a consequence, in the United States, wrote Tocqueville, religion is "the first political institution." Most of our professional chatterers just don't get it, or are determined to deny it.

Those who inveighed against the "ugliness" and "divisiveness" of religion in public introduced to our political discourse a loathsome, if not unprecedented, measure of vitriol and hatefulness. Attacking "the religious right" in a column titled "Merchants of Hate," Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times* compared Republicans to Joe McCarthy and accused them of worshipping "a God of intolerance." Then this: "If the official Republican platform is carried out, a thirteen-year-old girl who becomes pregnant as a result of being raped by her father and has an abortion could end in the gas chamber." If that is not a new low in demagogic dishonesty, it is surely in the running. There are indeed "merchants of hate" at the edges of, and sometimes solidly ensconced in, both parties. But as in the merchandising of almost everything else, our prestige media are second to none.

In earlier regimes, religion was established as the First Estate. Under American disestablishment, it has functioned informally as the first political institution. Like Tocqueville, most effective politicians have recognized that, drawing upon and paying deference to what in the last half of the century is called "the Judeo-Christian tradition." The curious, and very dangerous, thing today is that the Democratic Party has come down almost unequivocally on one side in our culture wars. Its decision making is dominated by, if not entirely controlled by, those who apparently view religion as an outdated, alien, and hostile force in our public life. Thus do Democrats virtually invite their opponents to claim, falsely, monopoly on the religio-moral tradition with which most Americans identify. Whatever the outcome of a particular election, the politicizing of the religio-moral heritage along such sharp partisan lines must be unhealthy for the country.

Certainly it is unhealthy for religion. Jews and Christians who are at all reflective about their religious convictions cannot help but wince at the vulgar enlistment of those convictions in campaign rhetoric. That said, however, we are reminded that ours is a democratic republic, and democracy means popular governance, and popular means vulgar. When one party, in this case the Democratic, is perceived to be hostile or indifferent to the religiously grounded beliefs of most Americans, it is hardly surprising that the other party will present itself as the champion of the nation's moral legacy. This can result in the exploitation and abuse of religion, and even, as the National Council of Churches rightly says, in blasphemy. The problem is not remedied, however, by a religious left that deplores the blasphemy of the opposition while bestowing uncritical blessings upon itself and its allies.

We heard much about President Bush "pandering to extremists," as when he addressed Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition. When Governor Clinton assured the Gay and Lesbian Alliance and the National Abortion Rights Action League of his wholehearted support, however, he was not pandering to extremists but "moving the Democrats to the moderate center." Of course it is outrageously unfair, but hardly surprising, given the well-documented ideological proclivities of the journalistic establishment.

Nonetheless, people who care about the integrity of religion do have a responsibility to raise some hard questions about groups such as the Christian Coalition. For starters, the name of Robertson's organization is offensively presumptuous. To be sure, many groups present themselves in a way that suggests that they have a monopoly on support for virtue and opposition to vice. Consider, for instance, the late Moral Majority. Or People for the American Way, which invites the inference that those who disagree are somehow un-American. Yet there is something singularly egregious about the "Christian Coalition." Christian is not just another word but the name by which those who profess Jesus Christ as Lord are named. "It was in Antioch that the disciples first received the name of Christians" (Acts 11). To claim the name for a partisan political faction is troubling. And it is even more troubling when the rhetoric of that faction suggests that who is and who is not a "true Christian" is defined by agreement with that faction. There are millions of Christian Americans who agree with all or most of the policies supported by the Christian Coalition, but they strongly and rightly resist the notion that that is a test of whether or not they are Christians.

We should all protest the exclusion of religiously grounded morality from public life. In recent years we have witnessed a strong and necessary challenge to those who decree that this is a secular society and therefore arguments shaped by religion have no place in the public forum. But organizations such as the Christian Coalition can exacerbate the problem that its members seek to remedy. To call for religious warfare, as some of them do, is to recall the religious wars of earlier centuries that unraveled civil society and led thoughtful people to the

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conclusion that religion in public is inescapably divisive and destructive. Cultural wars and political wars may be accommodated within the raucous workings of democracy. Religious warfare, however, raises the ante beyond the reach of democratic accommodation.

To absolutize the polarization between "us" and "them" is to create an adversary culture that is as potentially pernicious in undermining civil society as the continuing influence of the counterculture of the 1960s the Pat Robertsons claim to be countering. To speak about taking over America in the name of God is to invite resistance from everybody, including devout Christians and Jews, who understands that, as this nation is "under God," so all factions and causes must be kept under transcendent judgment. We must all make decisions about which course of action best approximates what we discern to be the will of God, but nobody unqualifiedly represents the will of God in the political arena.

The great and exceedingly difficult task for religious activists is to articulate a vision of a future more just and more promising for all. Without fudging the reality of conflicting visions, the rhetoric of religious warfare must give way to civil argument and persuasion. There is no denying that the phenomenon of the religious right is a defensive offense. Its partisans believe, with justice, that much of the country's cultural leadership declared war on them and now they are responding in kind. By responding in kind, however, they play into the hands of their adversaries. Whether they hear the call coming from the right or the left, Americans have a history of not responding well to calls to the barricades. Forced to choose between the world according to Pat Robertson and the world according to, say, Bill Moyers, they are likely to feel less threatened by the latter. Many Americans may reciprocate the contempt in which they are generally held by Harvard and Hollywood, but that does not mean that they are ready to embrace the future proposed by Liberty University or the 700 Club.

Of course it may be that some in the religious right know exactly what they are doing. They may believe it is to their advantage to heighten polarization, thus constituting themselves as a minority bloc that can hold conservative politics hostage for years to come. That is what Jesse Jackson did to liberal politics in the past, and what homosexual activists and pro-abortionists succeeded in doing in 1992. Or it may be that some religious activists do believe that they can, as they say, take over the Republican Party and then prevail in the next presidential election.

In that connection, Mr. Robertson in particular should let it be known whether he intends to run in 1996. If he does, he should without delay change the name of his organization from the Christian Coalition to the Committee to Elect Pat Robertson. Honesty requires as much, and it would help to remove from him the stigma of exploiting religion as the vehicle for advancing his ambitions. One may honorably aspire to becoming President, and one may even appeal for the support of those who share one's moral and religious convictions. It is dishonorable, however, to claim to be leading a great spiritual awakening while disguising such political aspiration. As it is, Mr. Robertson appears to want to have it all. He presents himself as a minister of the gospel while acting as a major player in the arena of electoral politics. The integrity of politics and, much more importantly, the integrity of religion require that a choice be made.

We do not wish to single out Mr. Robertson unfairly. The electoral uses and abuses of religion are widespread, and more long-standing on the left than the right. Religion will continue to be "the first political institution" of our society only as it is recognized as the moral framework for all and the exclusive property of none. Over several decades, the partisanship of the liberal oldline churches brought the public role of religion into deep discredit. Since the 1970s, the conservative churches have been in the ascendancy, and their leaders understandably think that it is their turn to try to frame the moral challenges for the society. It would be a great sadness if, looking back at this period, historians concluded that these conservatives, by their uncritical partisanship, succeeded only in further discrediting the possibility of a religiously informed moral discourse in public life.

The proper understanding of religion in public took a bad beating in this election year. Religion is debased when clergy accept the role of chaplain-cheerleader for competing political teams. When opposing voices claiming to speak for God are recruited to partisan purpose, it reinforces the suspicion that none of them speaks for God, which is a sound suspicion to reinforce. It also reinforces, however, the suspicion that politics must be hermetically sealed off from religious insight and conviction, which is disastrous in a democracy such as ours. The religious right is largely to blame for the sorry record of this year. But again, their frenzy and frequent fanaticism must be viewed as a reaction to the more sophisticated fanaticism of the religious left, and of secularists who would rule religion out of public life altogether. The 1992 campaign has demonstrated once more that we are a very long way from understanding the implications of religion as the first political institution of the republic. Perhaps we have never gotten it quite right, and never will. Nonetheless, we have no choice but to persist in the hope that we can do better. A lot better.

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Opinion

The Camera and the Sandwich

George A. Tobin

The late Sam Kinison, an incomparably loud and invariably offensive comedian, once delivered a comedy routine about famine. He remarked that whenever he sees heart-rending scenes of famine victims he wonders, "How come the film crew didn't just give the kid a sandwich? How come you never see that? What are they afraid of—that it would spoil the shot?"

His famine routine was really very funny. In a twisted way it was also trenchant. The "Camera or Sandwich" problem is a good starting point for examining any human problem. Is it better to try to collect lots of insights about many issues than to get bogged down in particular problems involving particular people?

Another way to look at it is to construct a spectrum with Mother Teresa at the end labelled "Sandwich" and Phil Donahue at the end labelled "Camera." Donahue has examined and discussed far more varieties of social problems, trends, and issues than Mother Teresa ever will. In fact, Phil's experience has been so vast that he felt compelled to write a book on anthropology. Mother Teresa, on the other hand, doesn't appear to be much of a theorist. She just runs around accepting personal responsibility for particular people and their problems.

Although I greatly admire Mother Teresa, I admit I live a lot more like Phil. It's just a lot easier to be more of a Camera kind of guy.

The national debate over the quality of American education is a good illustration of the Camera-Sandwich problem. Everyone wants to hold the Camera. The same guy who couldn't tell you what subjects his kids are currently taking in school and who hasn't checked their homework in five years has nevertheless devised a New Curriculum for America. He will probably get appointed to a Blue Ribbon Panel. After duly quantifying the problem with dire statistics, the Panel will recommend that every school in America should be made perpetually accountable to the Panel through detailed testing.

How come nobody wants to be appointed to a classroom? Education has always been solely a matter of making Sandwiches. One solution to the national education crisis may be to round up everyone who ever wrote an article on the subject, gave a speech on it, or served on a Blue Ribbon Panel. Each of them should then be sentenced to a three-year hitch as a seventh- or eighth-grade teacher. Teach math or poetry to twelve-year-olds for a few years and then come back and tell the rest of us what works and what doesn't. (I have already served a ten-year hitch as a high school and junior high school teacher, so cast no ironic smiles in my direction.)

Homelessness is another area where the Camera has triumphed over the Sandwich. So many people profess to be concerned about the homeless it's a wonder that there is any problem left. With all the discussion on TV, on Capitol Hill, and elsewhere you would think that more people would have reached around and just given the kid a Sandwich. I for one have never offered any public solutions to the problem of homelessness. That's because I live in fear that someone will say to me: "Well, if you're so concerned, why don't you take that old wino over there back to your house?" The danger is especially acute for me because there are many mindlessly consistent people among my family and friends who undertake things just like that.

The Camera-Sandwich problem is also why nobody likes the news media. Some people think media unpopularity stems from the perception that journalists are shallow, arrogant, and ideologically estranged from the rest of America. They are, of course, but that isn't the best reason to hate them. Instead we should hate them because those guys never make or carry any Sandwiches. They just point the Camera. They bring it into my living room and walk away. I then either have to assume some personal responsibility for the problem or Form an Opinion.

Like you, I invariably prefer to Form an Opinion. However, there is an environmental downside to opinion formation. When opinion polls suggest that the number of opinions formed has begun to mount uncontrollably, Congress then has to relieve the buildup by creating programs that Do Something About It. The rate of increase in the federal deficit is directly proportional to the rate of opinion-formation. (At least, that's my opinion.)

Journalists then reappear at this stage of the process and cause other weak minds to Form an Opinion about why Not Enough Is Being Done. (Of course not enough is being done—the whole point of Forming an Opinion is to keep from having to actually do anything.) Increasingly, Not Enough Is Being Done about more and more problems at a rate of tens of billions of dollars per year. Then, just when it seems as if things can't get any worse, there will be yet another idiot in a trenchcoat standing on the edge of a waste dump, a dying rain forest, or a refugee camp, pointing the Camera at

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yet another problem—and then walking away. After which, new opinions will begin to spring up around us so rapidly that we can almost hear the gavels falling in the committee rooms.

An even better reason to hate journalists is that we may be getting to be like them. We are all pointing the Camera and forgetting the Sandwich. If you point the Camera at enough problems you will begin to believe that there just aren't enough Sandwiches anyway, so why bother. The result is weaker attachments to our families, our schools, our churches, our immediate communities, and each other. Meanwhile, we are getting some terrific footage of people in trouble.

Don't get the impression that I'm about to advocate community activism and grass roots private charity. If I were to do so, you probably would then ask me how much of that sort of thing I do myself and I'm not about to let myself fall into any moral consistency traps. That's why, for example, I don't understand how anybody would want to be on a panel at one of those political luncheons where they talk about why the private sector ought to handle this or that social problem. They and their listeners *are* the private sector. If you don't make a lot of Sandwiches after giving or applauding a speech like that, what kind of person are you? Who wants that kind of pressure?

There are probably a lot of us who would like to turn the Camera off for a while. If we can, the real question will be whether anybody remembers how to make a Sandwich. Of course, if nobody can, at least it will make for a good story when the Camera goes back on.

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Getting Grover's Goat

John E. Coons

Herbert Grover is the increasingly visible state superintendent of public instruction for Wisconsin and a man determined that no tax dollar shall be soiled by the hand of a parent on its way to school. The superintendent has fought vigorously against educational choice and is back in the papers with some new heroics that I will shortly report. First, however, some background. Milwaukee is the site of an experimental state program that provides a $2,500 scholarship to a limited number of low-income parents who would like to move their child to a private school. The law was introduced by a black Milwaukee Democrat supported by a white Republican governor. The Democratic mayor of Milwaukee applauds the idea and would extend it. Social scientists report that despite several design flaws, it is working well enough. The few hundred poor families able to make practical use of the scholarship love it.

Mr. Grover hates it. He did his legal best to frustrate the program on a technicality, but the Wisconsin Supreme Court refused to cooperate, and the program continues. Unfortunately it is minuscule in comparison to the problem of inner-city education that it is supposed to address. Even if there were enough scholarships for all who wanted them, there would for two reasons be too few places to spend them. The first big problem is that $2,500 is not enough to start new schools, and only a handful of private schools are presently available to the children. What happened to all the Catholic and Lutheran schools that seem to be sitting around half empty? That's the other big problem. They are not eligible. The legislative program explicitly limits use of the scholarships to nonsectarian schools. Which brings us back to Grover's gripe. If there is anything that gets his goat more than parental choice, it is choice that can be exercised in religious schools. Hence his current preoccupation.

It seems that a school called Messmer High could and would take a fair number of poor Milwaukee kids in the "choice" program if allowed to participate. Messmer until 1984 was a school of the Catholic archdiocese; at that time it reopened as an "independent Catholic school" serving a student body that is 62 percent black and 65 percent non-Catholic. It survives now on philanthropy plus whatever its down-at-the-heel families can afford in tuition and donated personal services. All agree that it is an effective school.

In 1990, without solicitation from the school, Grover's office sent Messmer the department's application form for admission to the choice program. Two years later, at the urging of the chief academic expert on the program, Messmer finally applied. The department thereupon began a tortuous investigation that included multiple site visits and completion by the school of an enormous questionnaire about the role of religion at Messmer. This document included a maze of detailed inquiries about religious purposes and practices and drew the particular wrath of a major supporter of the school by asking menacingly, "Has the school received services from the Bradley Foundation?" Bradley's management had been publicly critical of Grover. When challenged on the offending

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question, Grover answered—occasioning some hilarity—that he had meant a different Bradley foundation, a dinky local fund whose sole purpose is to maintain a sculpture garden somewhere in Milwaukee.

Grover's eventual denial of Messmer's application has understandably provoked yet another flap—and probably another lawsuit. To deny the poor practical access to this excellent institution is fatuous policy, and the department comes off as not only awkward but mean. That said, however, what's the message? Even a fair-minded appraisal of Messmer's practices and curriculum suggest that it is indeed a religious school in every sense of that ambiguous term. Thus, even had Herbert Grover been a high-minded and tolerant democrat, the decision would have been entirely the same. And, even if the statute had specifically allowed the inclusion of religious schools, Grover's objection would still be plausible on constitutional grounds. It is quite arguable that he is merely doing his duty. And that is the sad truth that makes his dreary tale worth telling.

The legal problem is not the federal Constitution; under current doctrine the Establishment clause of the First Amendment is irrelevant. It may be that, given Milwaukee's present mix of private providers, the bulk of the aid to parents would have wound up in the hand of schools that promote religion; but this is not something in itself forbidden by federal law. The key question is, who effectively has the choice of schools, and the Milwaukee program empowers individuals, not institutions. So long as the locus of decision is the parent and not the church, the U.S. Supreme Court seems prepared to give its blessing. To put it in the Court's terms, choice programs involve no forbidden legislative purpose or practical effect; nor is the Court eager to find an invalidating "entanglement" of the church with the state. To be sure, something depends upon how a challenged program is designed and which President makes the next Court appointments; nevertheless there is a high probability that educational subsidies empowering the family to choose among the full array of providers will not be found an "establishment of religion."

The really intractable problems for choice in education lurk, rather, in those poorly understood and profoundly important sources of law, the state constitutions. Consider the Wisconsin example. Here are the words of its Article 1, Section 18: "... nor shall any money be drawn from the treasury for the benefit of religious societies. . . ."

At first glance one might say that this language is unthreatening to choice; yet in 1961 the Wisconsin attorney general gave the legislature his opinion that this provision probably forbade subsidized busing for parochial school children, even though that very policy had already been authorized by the federal Supreme Court under the First Amendment. What the First Amendment allows, the state may forbid under its own constitution, unless some other federal rule or right intervenes. And this was taken to be the law in Wisconsin until 1967, when voters adopted a legislative referendum specifically allowing the subsidy for transportation of parochial school children. Article 1:18, of course, remains the law in Wisconsin for subsidies for all other purposes.

Now, provisions of this general sort abound in the states. California, for example, has a more elaborate structure of which the following excerpts are the essence:

> No public money shall ever be appropriated for the support of any sectarian . . . school. [No state agency] shall ever . . . grant anything to or in aid of any . . . school . . . controlled by any religious creed.

Language of this sort is invitingly ambiguous and has been interpreted in diverse ways even by the same state courts. It is not hard, though, to appreciate the subtle power of these provisions in the hands of administrators and judges who are given to Groverism. Under the California provisions, for example, the state supreme court invalidated a program providing fourteen dollars' worth of purely secular books for the use of children enrolled in religious schools. The identical practice had been explicitly approved by the federal Supreme Court under the Establishment Clause.

These curious legal impediments to democratic and truly public systems of education in the state are a legacy of religious bigotry. Collectively they are known as the "Blaine Amendments," having been successfully imposed upon new states at the time of their admission to the Union by an act of Congress. The policy was promoted principally by James G. Blaine, remembered, among other things, for his association with the phrase "Rum, Romanism and Rebellion." Blaine's entanglement with the three R's was apparently chronic. Like Horace Mann and other brahmins of that age, Blaine saw the "public schools" themselves as a religious enterprise and the only one worthy of government encouragement. If the barbarian hordes could by economic necessity be forced into the government schools, teachers with the proper training might lure them from their native superstitions and win them to the American faith. Otherwise, the Republic might founder.

Blaine's fear was prescient: eventually the immigrants began to wrest legislative majorities from the nativists. Thanks to his foresight, however, the state constitutions remained to frustrate the various proposals made by the new majorities seeking to

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democratize education by subsidizing all manner of families and institutions.

Most state constitutions are not easily amended; fewer than a dozen provide for amendment by popular initiative. California is one of these, and this constitutes an important political difference. There is at least a chance that the initiative process will produce a full-scale system of educational choice in California by the year 2000; the same could happen in Michigan, Colorado, and Washington.

By contrast, in Wisconsin and most other states the path to amendment must begin with the legislature, an institution that is generally dominated by Groverism and committed to the preservation of public jobs and the Educartel. These states may manage a few modest experiments, but basic reform with real choice for all will probably have to await the kind of national political sea change that might follow from successful experiences in states with the initiative process. The polls show that on this issue the people are light years ahead of the legislators and the education conglomerate that sponsors them.

Meanwhile in any state with a "Blaine Amendment," the ordinary legislative process may be insufficient. If Wisconsin adopts a statute including religious schools in the Milwaukee choice program, Grover et al. will fall back upon the language of the state constitution. Indeed, in every "Blaine" state in which the legislature attempts school choice reform through statute, lawyers will have to persuade their state supreme court to interpret these old provisions in a manner that respects the legislative and popular will. The chances that choice will pass the test in these cases will vary according to the particular constitutional language, the local judicial precedents, and the composition of the state court at the time; but in every case there will be two commonalities of theory that are worth noting.

First, many state courts have in a general way tried to harmonize their own church-state provisions with the current interpretation of the First Amendment by the federal Supreme Court. Assuming that it is correct to predict a benign attitude on the part of the federal justices, educational subsidies to parents will have a better chance of survival in state courts today than they had ten years ago.

Second, and of great importance, the Blaine amendments were drafted in a way that is peculiarly congenial to devices like "vouchers" or "scholarships." Apparently Blaine and company saw the enemy only in institutional form, i.e., the church. Consequently, as in Wisconsin and California, they tended in their drafting of these provisions to identify the forbidden practice as grants made by the state to religious "establishments," "societies," "seminaries," "denominations," "sects," "creeds," and the like. There appears to be no state provision that explicitly imposes limits on the class of persons—natural or artificial—who may ultimately cash educational grants that are provided to individuals for redemption in schools of their choice.

Courts like the supreme court of the state of Washington have, nonetheless, forbidden exactly this policy when it empowers the individual to choose a religious school. The judges have inferred the proscription from language that is literally directed only against the favoring of institutions, concluding that the drafters of this or that particular constitution intended to exclude even "indirect" assistance to churches. This objection to indirect aid is hard to square with the array of unchallenged benefits that are bestowed upon religion indirectly by Washington and every other state—starting with protection from crime and fire. But no one expects consistency in this field.

Indeed, the interpretations of state constitutions as they apply to choice programs are likely to be a mixed bag. There will be losses, and where this occurs there will be one last constitutional string to the parents' bow. Those choosing a religious school will invoke the Free Exercise clause of the First Amendment to challenge the exclusion imposed by the state constitution. The state is forbidden, they will say, to discriminate explicitly against the religious choice. The present United States Supreme Court will eventually face the dilemma it has been building for itself over the last forty years. If the state includes religious schools it risks "establishment"; if it excludes them, it risks denying "free exercise." No one should wish to predict the outcome. In any case, for now it is enough to reiterate that in a democratic society the issue should never arise: the parents' choice of school should be a matter of indifference to the state.

Postscript: At a recent Moscow meeting on education reform I had occasion to discuss with the Russians the organic law that will govern their schools. The drafters of this new law, in pursuit of a democratic outcome, concluded that the state should promote freedom of choice in education, including prominently the choice of religious schools. There are already fifty new private schools in Moscow—some of them religious—that are receiving state aid. There is a good joke lurking here; and we can only hope that Grover and Company will come to appreciate it.

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The Goddess That Failed

Olivia Vlahos

"All hail to the Goddess," chanted the berobed and garlanded women, as they stood in a circle, hands clasped. "All hail to Her whose good green earth we share and guard. All hail to Her whose time has come again." The ritual, which took place in a forest clearing somewhere in Massachusetts, was filmed several years ago for a television documentary about covens of witches and the growing popularity and growing visibility of witchly leagues and associations. Devotees prefer the term "Wicca"—better yet, "Wicce," which refers specifically to female congregations and rites honoring the Great Goddess who ruled in Europe before Christian times, before her followers were martyred, before her worship was driven underground.

Wicce devotees are not the only women to have rediscovered the Goddess. She has become the sacral element of the feminist movement, its binding spiritual force. Congregations of Womanchurch abound. They meet in small groups and occasionally in large conventions. They support magazines and journals devoted to Goddess concerns. They have inspired the production of radio and television documentaries. When questioned by journalists about their beliefs, Goddess devotees are at pains to emphasize a common creed of nonviolence, care for the earth, and harmony of all things with nature. They point to the presence of men as well as women among their congregants (the actual numbers are not available), and they insist that, really, they are *not* man-haters. It's all bad press. The message of the Goddess is *love*.

Whatever the stated creed, not much love appears to be lost on either the male principle or the hapless male. Not, at least, in congregations all-female in membership. Nor in the writings of their theologians, who tend to blame "patriarchy" for all the world's ills—from war and poverty to the rape of Mother Earth. Racism and sexism complete the list of indictments, with emphasis on the latter.

Rituals used in worshipping the Goddess vary from group to group. Some take their inspiration from the practices and beliefs of tribal folk or are culled from the literature of myth and lore. Actual liturgies from the days when temples to various goddesses were still in business have been lost; ancient devotees took their secrets into the grave. Even so, knowledge of some few celebrations has survived in historical records or the findings of archaeology. One of these is the rite of the Corn King. Certain German tribes each year chose a man to fructify the Goddess Nertha and afterward to submit to sacrifice. The Roman historian Tacitus reported this practice in A.D. 100 or thereabouts, and the bodies of Nertha's victims have turned up, tanned to leather and nearly intact, in Danish peat bogs. Another well-known rite, this one associated with Anatolian Cybele, involved ecstatic self-emasculation by male converts to her worship. Roman society was understandably outraged when Cybele traveled to the gates of their city but, preoccupied as the Romans then were with invading Celts, could do little to keep her out.

Modern Goddess devotees are too polite—or too cognizant of legal consequences—even to call such rituals to mind, much less suggest reenactment. And, truth to tell, there would be few modern men, however Goddess-enamored, willing to go under the knife. A faint note of nostalgia nonetheless permeates the writings of feminist theologians, a sigh for the time when men cheerfully gave their all for love of Her, when they knew their place in religion and stayed there.

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Is Womanchurch in its various congregations and manifestations simply another of the fly-by-night cults that appear briefly in the encyclopedias of contemporary religion? Or has it succeeded in pushing institutional change? Under the lash of feminist rebuke, Reform and Conservative Judaism and a number of liberal Protestant denominations have hastened to ordain female rabbis and ministers. The Bible has been shorn of language deemed to be sexist. And in 1990, Presbyterians promulgated a new statement of faith that declares God to be both Father and Mother.

Womanchurch theologians, however, are unlikely to be appeased. For the real issue is not parity but power. Perhaps only when the Creator wears a female face and the beings made in Her image are given priority and precedence will hostilities be suspended. It will be a better world, then, with women in charge of it. Or so the reasoning goes. It will be a gentler world, one more attuned to feeling than to thinking, to the personal than to the mechanistic. Paradise will obtain again as it did before the Fall, before invading males and their false gods banished or tamed the Goddess in her many forms and subjugated her living daughters and devotees.

Was there ever such a world? Among today's Goddess congregations, its existence is an article of faith. In the late 1960s, art historian Merlin Stone set out to find the facts. She sought scientific confirmation of the Golden Goddess Age and of its Fall, publishing her findings in the book, *When God Was a Woman*. It is a vision of Utopia.

Most of the world's people have yearned for a perfect place where lions and lambs lie down together and everyone loves everyone else. Such hopes make endurable the bald realities of everyday life. Philosophers have composed many recipes for life as it ought to be lived, and now and again rulers have forced their people to follow the recipe. Some utopias have been located in a glorious future, still others in a glorious past, in a race of demigods after whose demise the world tottered slowly downhill. The Greeks named the stages of decline after the metals, ever less precious over time. Stone's feminist utopia accords with that pattern. But it is not an original creation. And not a feminist one, either. The realm of the Goddess was actually pioneered by men.

The late 1800s were years of intellectual ferment and discovery. New and shocking ideas were beginning to take hold. Scholarly acceptance of physical evolution suggested that culture, too, must have evolved, must have risen through stages on the way to modern times, each stage with its own religious orientation and style of life. The budding science of anthropology had begun to take note of people around the world who traced descent, not through Father in the familiar pattern, but through Mother instead. Classical scholars of the day thought they saw in the literature of Greece and Rome puzzling suggestions of this sort of descent. Was it an old pattern, buried under the legalisms and formality of city folk? J. J. Bachofen, a Swiss jurist, thought it might just represent one of humankind's stages of development. The fact that he adored his own beautiful mother and declined to marry until long after her death no doubt prompted his vision of a golden time characterized by what he called *Das Mutterrecht*—mother right—which also meant, in his thinking, mother-rule, or matriarchy. And why shouldn't mothers rule? "At the lowest, darkest stages of human existence," he said, "the love between mother and offspring is the bright spot in life, the only light in the moral darkness, the only joy amid profound misery."

Bachofen believed matriarchy was a conscious achievement by women after a long struggle to end conditions of debasing promiscuity and to achieve a higher, purer life. It gave rise to a kind of Victorian moral order, and a way of life marked by the invention of agriculture, communal ownership of property, and strict division of labor. Women, he said, became the keepers of hearth and home, men the hunters and warriors. Exactly the sort of domestic arrangements sneered at and scorned by Bachofen's contemporaries, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

Equally enamored of a matriarchal age and of the deity who ruled it was Robert Graves, the English poet and classical scholar. But his version of the matriarchate, described in the 1950s, functioned somewhat differently from the decorous, Victorian, marriage-minded model proposed by Bachofen. Graves' Goddess was different, too, being wholly compatible with the sexually free-wheeling attitudes then gaining ground among intellectual elites. In his book *The Greek Myths*, Graves offered this confident portrayal:

> Ancient Europe had no gods. The Great Goddess was regarded as immortal, changeless, and omnipotent; and the concept of fatherhood had not been introduced into religious thought. She took lovers, but for pleasure, not to provide her children with a father. Men feared, adored, and obeyed the matriarch; the hearth which she tended in a cave or hut being their earliest social center, and motherhood their prime mystery.

His view of the past fired scholarly imagination and came to be widely shared.

In Bachofen's vision, the Golden Age had come to an end when invaders bearing a solar religion had defeated the matriarchy with its lunar orientation. Graves' invaders entered the Greek peninsula

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in waves. The first migrants, he believed, had dutifully accepted the rule of the female theocracy and been content to serve as its warriors and year-kings. Cheerfully they had represented local gods of vegetation in the sacred marriage rites and cheerfully submitted themselves to the knife when their year was up. Later invaders were not so accommodating. Gradually or brutally they wrested control from female hands. And that was the end of Graves' Golden Age.

By the 1950s linguistic studies had identified the invaders to everyone's satisfaction. They were, quite simply, ancestors of people speaking modern Indo-European languages—English, Greek, Celtic, the Germanic, Romance, and Slavic groups, and the groups of Iran, Pakistan, and Northern India. And their geographical coverage was immense, far beyond the confines of the Hellenic Peninsula. What sort of people were these invaders? Comparisons of vocabularies and root words in the most ancient as well as modern forms of the related languages, as well as comparisons of their historically attested mythologies and lore, revealed remarkable similarities. All, it seemed, had revered triads of male gods, sky gods, warriors. All had possessed similar words for weapons of war, for horses, wheels, wagons. Their ancient vocabularies suggested a nomadic way of life based on cattle and the domesticated horse. They further suggested (just as Bachofen had predicted) families based on patriarchal principles—descent through males and male dominance in society as in theology.

Nobody then questioned the fact of invasion, for there were in Europe survivors of pre-invasion times: the non-Indo-European languages such as Basque or Georgian in the Caucasic group. And had not both Homer and Herodotus written about the Cretan tongue—different from Greek and still in existence as recently as 450 B.C.? As to the Indo-European point of entry, however, nobody was certain. Whence had the invaders come into Europe? Champions of various homelands entered the scholarly lists. Those who favored what was then the southern Soviet Union gradually gained prominence.

That they did so owed in large part to the work of Marija Gimbutas, a renowned author, Professor of Archaeology at the University of California, and for many years a leading expert in the field of Indo-European Studies. Together with Soviet archaeologists, she was able to document the Caspian Steppes homeland of what has been variously dubbed the Battle-Axe Culture, the Corded Wear Culture, or, Gimbutas' preference, the Kurgan Culture, so called from the type of burial its people accorded their elites, the chariot-driving, horse-riding warriors who overran the farm communities of Europe beginning sometime in the fifth millennium B.C.

By the 1970s Gimbutas was digging sites in Bulgaria where farmers had settled long before the arrival of horsemen on the scene. The pioneers had initially crossed the Hellespont from Anatolia sometime before 7000 B.C., it was thought, bringing with them horticultural skills and a way of life developed in the Middle East. Gradually that way of life began to claim Gimbutas' entire attention and her allegiance as well. In 1982, she celebrated the farmers' culture (and decried its "savage" destruction) in her book *Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*. By "Old Europe" Gimbutas meant Greece and the Balkans where, she believes, art and artifact give testament to a Goddess Creatrix who had many aspects but was always One.

In 1984 she confirmed her change of fealty in a scholarly forum. Responding to a paper in *Current Anthropology*, she described the basic warlike features of the Kurgan Culture and contrasted them with the Old European "matricentric, sedentary, and peaceful culture." The invaders had imposed a "patriarchal/androcratic" system and hybridized the lunar and earth goddesses with the "Indo-European male pantheon of sky gods." Colleagues were beginning to suggest that her reconstructions of Old European Culture went beyond what the evidence could properly sustain and that a little more attention to the ambiguities might well be in order.

Undeterred, Gimbutas continued to pursue her own vision of a Golden Age. Five years later, in *The Language of the Goddess*, she connected past to present: "We are still living under the sway of that aggressive male invasion and only beginning to discover our alienation from our authentic heritage—a gylanic [sexes equal], non-violent, earth-centered culture." The heart of this culture was the Goddess, monolithic and triumphant. Images that other experts prefer to associate with the male principle Gimbutas ignores or recruits to the service of her divinity. Indeed the Goddess of *Language* has begun to displace the male principle altogether, having become parthenogenetic, able to conceive without the agency of god or man.

The process of displacement can be read in the organization of Gimbutas' two books. In *Goddesses*, two chapters out of ten describe the male divinity as year king and holy child. In *Language*, which extends the sway of the Goddess both geographically and chronologically to the Old Stone Age, the male principle receives even shorter shrift. Of the book's twenty-four color plates, only one depicts a god figure. Of twenty-eight chapters, only one describes his roles. Her hands are tied, Gimbutas explains. The male principle was simply not important to the people of Old Europe.

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Central to this view is Çatal Hüyük. Located in what is now Turkey, settled before 6000 B.C. (how much before cannot be told since the excavations by James Mellaart have been terminated by the Turkish government), this nascent city site is a veritable Goddess bonanza. Her figures and symbols are everywhere in the excavated area. We see her slim and columnar, fat and fertile, giving birth to horned beasts. We see her in abstract signs that, says Gimbutas, represent butterflies and bees and call to mind the myths of Anatolian Cybele (goddess of more recent times in the region) who, in the guise of Queen Bee, rips out the drone's genitalia in the act of generation. Certainly there is nothing abstract about the breasts of the Goddess depicted on the walls of many shrine rooms. Buried in each is the beak of a vulture or the jaw of a wild boar, explicit reminders that the Goddess is death-giver as well as source of life.

Topping even the Goddess in pride of place and number of images, however, are the modeled heads and wall paintings and engravings of horned animals. Dominant among these is the mighty bull. Though decayed by time, these figures convey an unmistakable sense of male energy. A superficial impression, Gimbutas would say. In her view, the bull heads merely reflect the generative powers of the Goddess, being each a model of the female reproductive system, metaphorically speaking. Head and horns represent the womb and paired fallopian tubes.

Gimbutas' view of the bull is curiously at odds with those cherished by ancient cultures of the Middle East, themselves recipients of influences from Çatal Hüyük. We find those different meanings in the remains of Sumerian cities located in what is now southern Iraq. Sumerian writings (beginning sometime before 3000 B.C.) tell us that every god had a bull as alter ego and was addressed as "fierce young bull with lapis lazuli beard." The destructive power of the sky—unleashed with fear and trembling by the gods—was called The Bull of Heaven. Gods were depicted standing on the backs of bulls or other horned animals. (Just such figures have been found in Çatal Hüyük, but Gimbutas neglects to note them.) Perhaps this convention sheds light on the cult of the bull in Crete (c. 1700 B.C.), where acrobatic youths once vaulted between the horns of wild aurochs. For sport? In sacrifice? We cannot say. But the Spanish Corrida, the yearly running of the bulls in Pamplona, is clearly an evocation of ancient meanings and metaphors, of times when the bull was seen as ultimate expression of male power, and young males must needs test their courage before the horns.

It is worth noting that all Sumerian deities, whether male or female, wore horned miters. So did deities of later people in the region. The largest number of horns crowned the fifty great gods of the Sumerian pantheon, headed by the primal four: An, the Sky Father; Enlil, his son, god of winds; Enki, patron of wisdom and sweet water; and Ninhursag, "Lady of the Womb"—mother of animals and men, form giver, birth giver, "Midwife of the Gods." "Her image," says Thorkild Jacobsen, one of the great Sumerologists, "was one rooted in the family . . . and she had no specific political function [but] a decisive power in the universe and in the scheme of things." All in all, very like Gimbutas' version of the Great Goddess of Europe. But a lot warmer and more personable.

Ninhursag, however, was soon enough put in the shade by lovely and willful Inanna, whose powers (wheedled from Father An) included command of thunder and rain. "Queen of Heaven," she rode the back of a lion whose roar was thunder and who carried her into combat. For she was the goddess of war. She was also the camp follower, the harlot, the patroness of prostitutes. (Thus the ritual prostitution featured in many ancient temples of the Middle East.) Inanna also managed to charm the gift of cunning from Enki, and from Enlil, the gift of force. She literally cornered the power market. In his book *Treasures of Darkness*, Jacobsen says, "We see her in all the roles a woman may fill except the two which call for maturity and sense of responsibility. She is never depicted as a wife and helpmate or as a mother." Samuel Noah Kramer, another great Sumerologist, calls her the epitome of liberated woman and, half in love with her himself, hopes that at life's end his ashes may be buried in the ruins of Uruk, Inanna's city.

Male gods of Sumer, and the Middle East in general, are seen to play one of two divine roles. They are gentle, self-sacrificing, obedient souls, pawns of the Goddess. Or they are forceful warriors who vanquish chaos, unleash the storm, defend heaven and earth. The goddess roles are likewise dichotomized. They are represented by Ninhursag and Inanna. The Ninhursag role is glorified by Gimbutas and in the celebrations of today's Goddess devotees. But is it Inanna who supplies the real role model for today's woman?

There is more than a whiff of the masculine about Inanna, as there is about the native goddesses of Greek mythology. Aphrodite, accounted a relative newcomer on the scene, embodies Inanna's appetite for carnal love, but it is Artemis and especially Athena who are the more powerful players among the Olympians. Eternal virgins, they pursue the masculine occupations of hunting and war. Whatever gods can do, they can do better. In several myths, Athena is shown besting Ares, the male war god. Others describe Artemis wheedling out of Father Zeus exactly what brother Apollo had been given in terms of cities, retinue, and power.

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Nor were their sister goddesses, those assigned the domestic duties of hearth and home, exactly shrinking violets. Mother Demeter valiantly searches the wide world and outwits gods and kings to find her lost child. And Hera, supposedly one of those parthenogenetic avatars of the Great Goddess, forcibly wed to the conquering male, so harried Zeus as to make him ridiculous among his peers, the ultimate henpecked spouse.

So who conquered whom? And what happened to the Fall? One is hard put to read in these feisty figures evidence of a hostile takeover. Multiplying contradiction prompts skepticism. Can we really know what happened in the distant past? The answer must be no. Archaeology can recover the things people leave behind—their bones, their tools, their art and architecture. It can put them in a general time frame and compare them with findings at other sites. In the absence of writing, however, it cannot extract meaning. It cannot know for sure what ancient people thought about death or even the things they made. It cannot infer from the artifacts how people organized family.

Even writing (particularly in its fragmentary beginnings) does not wholly disclose old secrets. Nor do the myths of more recent times give certain clues to the way things were. Writings and artifacts are always subject to interpretation which, in turn, depends on what the scholar sees or chooses not to see or fails to see because it does not conform to the model he has in mind.

One record alone furnishes a corrective to interpretation. That is the ethnographic record, the collected descriptions of all the ways people have actually lived written by observers on the scene. (I emphasize totality; nobody supposes that mistakes in observation do not occur.) When in the early 1900s anthropology was able to get its ethnographers into the byways and backwaters of the world, it soon found that their reports quite contradicted the models of culture conceived by scholarly folk back home. All hunting people, it seemed, were not alike in terms of family, religion, technology, or outlook on life. Ditto for all the other modes of making a living. Each culture was, in fact, unique and had adapted to changing circumstances in its own unique way. The net weight of contradiction moved most anthropologists to discard their theories about cultural evolution. It was acknowledged that human society in general had tended over time to become more complex, but the rigid model of mega-stage advancement soon became obsolete.

Does that make the Golden Goddess Age obsolete as well? Was there ever a time when people everywhere traced descent through Mum, were ruled by Mum, lived in perfect harmony with Mum's good green earth and with one another? The ethnographic record tends to veto the proposition. It tells us, for example, that matrilineal descent and farming are not necessarily bound together: everywhere economy and inheritance assort independently. It tells us that matriliny does not mean matriarchy. Descent through females does not imply female rule, in the house or out of it. Matrilineal families are headed, not by Mum herself, but by her brother. (Dad goes to Sister's house to throw his weight around.) In many settings women individually or as a gender may wield considerable political power. Nowhere, however, do they enjoy dominion. The kind and degree of power they do possess, moreover, do not necessarily accord with the rules of descent. In some patrilineal societies, women may be forceful and independent; in some matrilineal ones, quite the reverse is true. If no unequivocal evidence of matriarchy has yet been discovered, neither is patriarchy anywhere absolute.

Nor does matriliny mean nonviolence. Some of the world's most formidable warriors can be found in matrilineal societies. One thinks of the Bemba, who conquered widely in Central Africa, and of the Iroquois of Upper New York State. Even the stereotypically peaceable matrilineal tribes did and do honor war gods. The New Mexican Zuni are currently rescuing theirs from various modern museums.

Matriliny does not mean ecological purity, either. Among the most talented potters in the world, Pueblo people of the ancient American Southwest contributed to the region's aridity and its erosion cycle by destroying forests to fuel their kilns. And Paleoindians, ancestors of living First Americans, rather handily made the native horses, elephants, and several species of bison extinct by driving them en masse over cliffs and into bogs where many were killed but few provided meat. (Were hunters matrilineal in descent? Let's be fair; we don't know.)

A goddess above does not guarantee rank below. Nor does a celestial tilt toward the male principle automatically disadvantage mortal women. Nowhere on earth is the Goddess in her aspects more powerful and more feared than in Hindu India. There reigns Mother Kali, mistress of life and death, hungry for blood. Once it was the blood of men she craved; today's worshipers offer substitutes. Yet nowhere on earth do ordinary, lowly women have less power and suffer greater indignities than in India. Once it was a wife's pious duty to accompany her husband in death, ending her life on his funeral pyre. Today's bride of humble station, whose father cannot afford to go on paying dowry, chances immolation in her husband's home, where she may be set alight by his mother in order to obtain for her son a new wife with yet another dowry.

Judaism is often indicted by feminists as the ultimate in sexist faiths. After all, didn't its male

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God create Adam in His image and then draw Eve from Adam's rib as a sort of afterthought? Even so, male dominance in Hebrew politics and religion did not inhibit the martial valor of Jael or Judith, did not belittle the leadership of Deborah, a prophetess, a judge, and as she said, "a mother in Israel." Where in ancient literature can one find a more reverential tribute to the good woman than in Proverbs, chapter 31? No cloistered drab, this busy creature did it all and had it all: contented husband, happy children, a well-run household, and her own little textile business to boot.

The Protestant Reformation, in its Old Testament orientation, has been viewed as more bad news for women. Didn't pastors of New England churches often cite Milton's line, "He for God only, she for God in him"? But wait. In the New World, maxims did not necessarily dictate behavior. American women fought Indians on the frontier, followed their menfolk to war, reared children in the wilderness, and were the backbone of a new nation. No wonder Alexis de Tocqueville held the American woman in such admiration. Unlike her European sister, he said, she makes her own choices and sticks by them. The Protestant emphasis on choice, on personal responsibility for salvation, made individualism not only possible for women, but virtually obligatory. Would either the suffragist movement of the last century or current feminism have emerged from another sort of cultural climate?

"Pay little attention to what people say," advised a wise old anthropologist. "Watch what they do." What people do everywhere is to honor, overtly or otherwise, *both* gender principles. In all truth, you won't find one without the other, even in some unlikely places. The matrilineal Navajo may focus their religious affections on Changing Woman, but she did not create the universe, being the child of First Man and First Woman, nor does she rule alone. Talking God and the Hero Twins have equally important roles to play. Among the strongly male-oriented Cheyennes, the recognized culture hero is a little girl who, with the help of animals, punished her murdering father and brought order to the tribe. The Council of Chiefs and the Soldier Societies, all instruments of justice and order, were her gifts long ago.

The "patriarchal" Celto-Germans, offshoots and descendants of those Kurgan folk whose invasions supposedly conquered the Great Mother, honored goddesses as well as gods. And these formidable females were just as demanding and bloodthirsty as their male counterparts. The result was equal-opportunity sacrifice. Recovered bodies and the mode of execution employed in each case prove the point.

Even the Australian Aborigines who, when initially encountered by Europeans, did not know the first thing about biological paternity, honored power beings both male and female. These formed conjoint families, however much their sacred duties might keep them apart. And though anthropologists have long deemed Aboriginal ritual a male monopoly, we now know that women in their separate congregations and lodges have always held equal responsibility for serving the purposes of the great powers and maintaining the mighty rounds of nature.

The Great Goddess of ancient days was, in the view of scholars devoted to Her cause, an embodiment of the life cycle, of fertility, of nature, and of the earth. Her rituals—as reinterpreted in today's Goddess congregations—focus on these attributes. That view and those rituals invite speculation about the true nature of the Fall. If over the long years involved in the onset of civilization the male principle actually did achieve prominence, the reason may hinge on the appeal it made to mind over matter. For mortals need challenge and stern tasks. That is a human, not a gender, imperative. As a species we represent a triumph in survival against the odds, and we survived by way of wits and will, by way of cooperation and interdependence, man and woman, young and old. Had we bound ourselves forever to the turning seasons, to flesh and process, time and tide, we should long since have been made extinct. Had we, like the Year King, chosen rather to accept fate than to seek possibility, we should never have left village life behind.

This is the message of the historical divinities, male and female, who over the long years ceased to be anonymous representatives of Process and became individuals with unique and sometimes capricious personalities, individuals who exhibited behavior sometimes good, sometimes bad, sometimes licentious and gross. Still more change was in order. As societies became larger and more complex, worshipers demanded more of their deities. Increasingly they were asked to transcend local traditions emphasizing fertility and the cycles of nature; increasingly they were asked to set moral standards and to exemplify the rule of law. Gradually their numbers were reduced and their functions consolidated until a Supreme Being, variously titled, governed all.

The Goddess did not fall victim to conquest but rather to trend, not to conspiracy but to obsolescence. She did not die alone. Most of the old gods went with her. Some few survived as djinns or evil spirits, some were translated into hobgoblins, fairies, "little people." The process was well underway in the Mediterranean world before Alexander of Macedon came close to achieving imperium.

In the monotheistic shakeout, what of the old

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themes remained? The first themes of all remained: the gender principles, the great mysteries of life and death and salvation, incorporated into the image of Holy Family.

We find sacred marriage and holy family featured in nearly every people's understanding of how the world began. Representations of father-mother-child turn up—along with and among the figurines of fat females and long horned bulls—in every Old World site associated with early farming days. Among Çatal Hüyük's treasures are schist plaques of the Goddess with consort and child—a sacred family. (These are unmentioned in Gimbutas' two books about the Goddess.)

Sacred marriage, usually completed by the birth of sacred child, was one of the most popular celebrations of Sumer's city states. In ritual dramas, these happy events were often followed by tragic loss of child or perhaps one of the holy parents. Recovery of the lost one after long search brought joy to end sorrow, brought irresistible promise as well. For the ritual not only affirmed the continuity of life, but gave the ordinary worshiper hope of life ever after.

Ancient Egypt's sacred family included Osiris, the first pharaoh, culture bringer and lawgiver, and Isis, his gentle sister-wife. Torn in pieces by his vengeful brother, the body of Osiris was scattered over the world. Isis retrieved each piece and from them conceived the holy sun child Horus, who lived to avenge his father. No college of priests was ever formed to celebrate this holy family, so loved and honored by common folk. Yet each living pharaoh was hailed as an incarnation of Horus and, after death, was given the Osiris name by which he would be remembered.

The concept of holy family in Greece flowered into the Eleusinian Mysteries, religious events celebrated on the Aegean Coast near Athens long before people speaking Greek (the Kurgan invaders) had entered that land. It would still be sacred long after the Olympian gods had ceased to inspire belief or to prompt worship. There were several cycles of rites—one did not, after all, become a full member the first time out. Although the public celebrations have come down to us—the processions, the shared banquets, the torchlit dramas, the purification of devotees in the sea—only initiates were privy to the holiest secrets, and these were never fully revealed. Hints in various records suggest an enactment of sacred marriage—God and Goddess—followed by the birth of sacred child. Writers of the period did, however, speak of the joy and solace experienced by participants in the mysteries.

The first Greek Ptolemy to rule in Egypt cannily sought to combine the Osirian family with that of Eleusis. He had very much in mind the unification of the two peoples, Egyptian and Greek. It was an inspired idea and a great success well into Roman times and everywhere in the Hellenistic world except Egypt. The two family dramas were easily merged because they shared many similarities; doubtless both forms reflected a common, more ancient origin. In the new religion—its liturgies composed by priests imported from Eleusis—Osiris became Serapis, "Savior of All Men." Horus (always depicted as a nursing infant) became Harpocrates. But Isis remained herself, "Queen of Heaven, Haven of Peace, and Altar of Pity." One of her hymns proclaims:

> I am Isis. I am she whom women call goddess. I ordained that women should be loved by men; I brought husband and wife together and invented the marriage contract. I ordained that women should bear children, and that children should love their parents.

One could hardly find a more ringing endorsement of family.

After the triumph of Christianity, Isis survived in the Madonna, and not only through a melding of attributes. Some of her very statues later served to represent Mary in early Christian churches. Church fathers earnestly strove to perpetuate the rites and images of holy family. In addition to the Nativity, celebrated every year at Christmas time, Christianity itself was cast as Family writ large. Headed by Father God, it was nurtured by Mother Church, and upheld by the faithful as their children. The hierarchy of ministrants received family titles. The supreme pontiff was *Il Papa*, the Pope, Father of Christendom. Priests were also "father"; nuns, "sister"; monks, "brother"; leaders of convents, "mother." Female saints were often thought of as "mother" by those dedicated to their celebration. In those early times, there were many female preachers, each one a "mother" to her flock.

It is true that the importance of celibacy was a tenet of early Christian faith. From its earliest days, Christianity fostered gender-segregated cloisters, devoted alike to the glory of God and the preservation of learning. And yet, in the church of each monastery and convent, there was to be found the same high altar dedicated to the Holy Trinity, the same Lady Chapel for the Blessed Mother, and altars and shrines to saints of both sexes. Though marriage might not be for them, cloistered congregations upheld the sanctity of the married state and the holy duty of couples to bring up offspring who would be a credit to their faith. In cloister or in home, meanings were the same. All prayed for a common goal, a common good, and the perpetuation of life, which is what family is all about.

New ideas and forms of the sacred continually surface in the world. Their survival seldom depends on the validations of history or science or even common sense, but rather on how well they reflect

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current trend, meet current need, and express ultimate verities. Among these are the power of two and the holiness of family. Consider the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints founded by Joseph Smith not much more than 150 years ago. It flourishes today largely because it is family centered. For Mormons, marriages are made in Heaven and sealed there for all eternity. The Universal family of Sun Myung Moon, founded less than fifty years ago, thrives on similar metaphors. Among America's mainstream denominations, only those with strict rules and traditional standards, those at the sectarian end of the scale, are attracting many new converts. That trend is even more strikingly in evidence in Central and South America where, in some countries, evangelical Christians account for more than 25 percent of the population. In their congregations, the older Hispanic ideals of macho male and submissive female are submerged in the image of family partnership, faithful, self-improving, devoted to children and to one another. Devoted, too, to growing in grace, made manifest by growing prosperity.

Writings by feminist theologians have little to say about this kind of partnership and not much about children, either. And yet today the problems of children and their parents loom largest among our nation's concerns. The intact family is now acknowledged to be the best guarantor of an individual's happiness and health, society's best hedge against disorder. What is more, the critical importance of father in the life and growth of children is widely understood. Can a spiritual movement that abolishes, diminishes, or demonizes men also persuade them to embrace the father role? Does the Goddess want to do that? Can a movement that portrays women as both better than, and victims of, men help to strengthen marital ties? Does the Goddess want to do that? At a time when the common good is all too often hostage to the desires of strident groups, can a movement that speaks of love but refuses conciliation help bridge society's rifts? Or does it have a vested interest in continued strife?

If the Goddess does not speak to society's problems, does she effectively address those of her own constituents? Yes, insist feminist theologians. She is the indispensable model and mentor without whom women cannot achieve their rightful place in the sun. But which model fills the bill? And which goddess is the *real* Goddess after all? Is she to be Birth Mother, patroness of procreation? (Can those who champion abortion on demand worship without contradiction an emblem of fertility?) Is she to be War Queen and Harlot, patroness of sexual recreation, gleefully beating men at their own game? (Doesn't that image accentuate the masculine? Doesn't it sanction bellicosity? How to reconcile a creed of nonviolence with the actual presence of women soldiers on the scene?) Is the Goddess to be Mother Nature, mistress of animals, vegetation, and the harvest? (Can such a being meet the needs of people inhabiting a complicated and technological world? Can she meet the needs of congregants who make a living by their wits and come no closer than the local supermarket to the ultimate sources of sustenance?) Is the Goddess to be anonymous, implacable Prime Directive, mistress of life and death, self-fertilizing and alone, disdainful of the petty concerns of men—or women, for that matter? (Such a grim vision, as remote as any male divinity, is unlikely to enjoy wide popularity.)

Constituents of the Goddess are, more often than not, academics, professionals, members of the highly educated elite. They talk a lot, they argue and dissent, they are keenly attuned to slight. They assemble in large convocations, look around, and then ask, "Where are the others? Where are the housewives and secretaries and factory workers? Where are the women who go dutifully to mass and cook for parish fairs? They need the Goddess, too."

But do they? Does a philosophy that sacralizes Self speak to a woman concerned with Other? Does a movement that expects the worst of men touch the woman who has borne sons as well as daughters and loves them both? Can it recruit her whose husband is also best friend? Does it offer anything to the woman less interested in self-fulfillment than in making ends meet? Has the Goddess a reliable guide for negotiating everyday quandaries and perils? Can she bless and nourish those personal ties without which life is not worth living? Can she bring comfort when ties are broken and loved ones lost?

These homely tasks are not in Her celestial job description. The Goddess of feminism (in whatever form) was rescued from oblivion to emblemize and sanctify the quest for woman-power in the private as in the political arena. And the evocation of a Golden Goddess Age lent the quest scholarly warrant. Ultimately, the Goddess is not for the many but for the self-chosen few. She is not a divinity for all seasons. It is hard to believe she ever was. FT

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Historians and the Reality of Christ

Avery Dulles

After a period of relative quiescence, the quest for the historical Jesus has again become a center of controversy. Two major contributions to the theme—John P. Meier's *A Marginal Jew* and John Dominic Crossan's *The Historical Jesus*—appeared just before Christmas 1991 and were widely reviewed. They have provoked criticisms and countercriticisms, focusing primarily on issues of method.

The quest for the historical Jesus is not an idle pastime. It began in the eighteenth century as a fierce attack on the Christ of faith. Throughout the nineteenth century, its aim was to establish another Christ to replace the Christ of dogma. In the words of Albert Schweitzer, who wrote the classic history of the early quest, "The dogma had first to be shattered before men could once more go out in quest of the historical Jesus, before they could even grasp the thought of his existence." The assault on orthodox belief has not died out. Many historians of the present day share the same animus.

Can believers be indifferent to the historical quest? Can they keep their faith intact while letting historians do what they will with the Jesus of flesh and blood? Can they let go of the historical grounds that have heretofore sustained Christians in their belief? These questions raise difficult and fundamental issues about what faith is, what history is, and how the two are related.

For purposes of this article faith may be considered a firm adherence to a total vision of reality in the light of God's revealing word. For Christians that word comes to us preeminently in Christ, as he is known through the canonical Scriptures and the teaching of the Church. Faith involves a free, reasonable assent made possible by the grace of God, which enables us to discern and confidently embrace God's revealing word.

The concept of history is complex and controverted. In the broadest sense it includes everything we know, or think we know, about the human past, whether based on faith, on vague general impressions, or on methodical investigation.

In a narrower sense, history is knowledge derived by means of a recognized method devised to provide reliable access to the human past. The method involves a kind of detective work by which we critically use the available sources, including documents that testify to past events. Applied to Christian origins, historical method will seek to ferret out the earliest and most reliable reports about Jesus and, from them, to reconstruct the sayings and deeds that may most plausibly be attributed to Jesus and his circle.

There are no rules that automatically determine what accounts are to be accepted as accurate. Historians generally rely on rules of thumb. For instance, they prefer accounts that can be traced to early witnesses and those that are attested by several independent sources. They are also inclined to credit reports that present Jesus as saying and doing what the Jews of his day would have avoided as well as making assertions that would be embarrassing to the early Church. This principle of discontinuity, as it is often called, does not presuppose that Jesus was never in agreement with the

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Jews of his day or that his character and doctrine were generally out of phase with the teaching of the early Church, but simply that it is more difficult to account for dissimilar statements as originating from sources other than Jesus himself.

To give more precision to their method some historians make assumptions of a philosophical character. According to a positivist view that was widely accepted fifty or a hundred years ago, history is a science analogous to physics or chemistry. It proceeds on the assumption that the world is a closed system in which causes and effects are connected by strict necessity. History, in that view, leaves no place for the unique, the exceptional, and especially not for events brought about by God's direct activity. On positivist grounds many historians have written off the Gospels as unreliable, insofar as they portrayed Jesus as an utterly unique figure, conscious of a special relationship to God, and working miracles by divine power.

This positivist view is not convincing. The historian cannot antecedently rule out the possibility that something unique and unparalleled might happen, or that God might bring about exceptional events by an exercise of divine power. If positivist rules were adopted, history and faith would be on a collision course from the beginning.

Does the possibility of miraculous or supernatural events introduce a surd and thereby destroy the intelligibility of history? This might be the case if God frequently interposed his action without any plan or reason. In the view of theology, however, God respects the order of created causality that he himself has established. If he intervenes, he does so rarely and according to a rationale that has its own intelligibility. Where serious grounds exist for suspecting that God has acted in a direct, supernatural way, historians cannot dismiss the evidence in the name of historical integrity. They are invited to look higher and to enter into dialogue with theologians. Such dialogue is necessary for the sake of history itself. The theological intelligibility of the alleged event should enter into the assessment of the credibility of the reports.

In their quest for the historical Jesus, scholars have adopted four different approaches.

According to the first approach, history is antithetical to orthodox faith. The quest for the historical Jesus, as in the works of Hermann Samuel Reimarus, David Friedrich Strauss, Ernest Renan, and others, arose from hostility to dogma: efforts were made to substitute a purely human Jesus of history for the Christ of faith and dogma. This effort still goes on in our day, as may be seen from the works of John Allegro, Rudolf Augstein, Morton Smith, and Thomas Sheehan. Another partisan of this effort, Paul Hollenbach, asserts that the Jesus of history is to be sought "in order to overthrow, not simply correct, [what José Porfirio Miranda calls] 'the mistake called Christianity.'" The mistake, according to Hollenbach, was the "divinization of Jesus as Son of David, Christ, Son of God, Second Person in the Trinity, etc."

This use of history is of course unacceptable to Christian believers. They reply that antidogmatic historians are dogmatic in their own way, since they antecedently rule out the unique and the transcendent. Their approach ruptures the continuity between Jesus and the community of his followers. It does violence to the sources in expunging sayings and deeds of Jesus that are attested to by what, according to the standard criteria, must be regarded as early and reliable traditions. Having reduced Jesus to the stature of a common prophet or wonder worker, this approach has difficulty in accounting for the extreme reactions of his followers and adversaries and for the rapid emergence of Christianity as a distinct religious faith.

Crossan's recent book on *The Historical Jesus* in some ways resembles the approach just described. It portrays Jesus as a "peasant Jewish Cynic," whose conception of the kingdom of God involved "a religious and economic egalitarianism that negated alike and at once the hierarchical and patronal normalcies of Jewish religion and Roman power." Crossan describes Jesus as a magician bent on subverting the existing social structures. He denies the historicity of the Last Supper, including the institution of the Eucharist. He likewise rejects the stories about the discovery of the empty tomb. The earliest accounts, he believes, saw no need for resurrection appearances between the departure of Jesus and his now imminent return in glory. But Crossan does not portray himself as opposing the Christ of dogma. In fact, he defends the assertion that Jesus was wholly God and wholly man. "I find, therefore, no contradiction between the historical Jesus and the defined Christ, no betrayal whatsoever in the move from Jesus to Christ." With his somewhat paradoxical and apparently selective appropriation of the Church's dogma, Crossan is able to affirm the identity between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith.

The second major position may be called separationist. It maintains that history and faith, if each keeps within its legitimate sphere, can neither confirm nor contradict one another. History deals with empirical facts of the human past that are accessible to any rational person who uses historical method. Faith, on the other hand, deals with transcendent realities that are known only by revelation, freely accepted by religious believers thanks to the grace of God. The Jesus who lived and died in Palestine belongs to history; the living, risen Christ belongs to faith. This, roughly speaking, was the position of the dialectical theologians

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between the first and second world wars, particularly Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich.

To judge from the first volume of his *A Marginal Jew*, John P. Meier is not far removed from this second position. Since his views are subject to clarification and modification in future volumes, one can only speak tentatively at this point. It is also not certain whether his method reflects his personal preferences or his desire to reach out to a wider audience, including non-Christians. In any case he keeps the Christ of faith well insulated from historical scrutiny, so that as a historian he can be content to let the chips fall where they may. Agreeing with Bultmann and his school that "the Jesus of history is not and cannot be the object of Christian faith," he writes:

> In the historical-critical framework, the "real" has been defined—and has to be defined—in terms of what exists within this world of time and space, what can be experienced in principle by any observer, and what can be reasonably deduced or inferred from such experience. Faith and Christian theology, however, affirm ultimate realities beyond what is merely empirical or provable by reason: e.g., the triune God and the risen Jesus.

A little later Meier writes: "In the realm of faith and theology the 'real Jesus,' the only Jesus existing here and now, is this risen Lord, to whom access is given only in faith."

Meier admits that there must be some continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, since the risen Jesus was previously the man from Nazareth. But he leaves unclear whether any particular assertions about the earthly career of Jesus are required by faith. His discussion of the virginal conception of Jesus and of the resurrection may be used as examples.

Although he points out in a footnote that some theologians, such as Karl Rahner and Walter Kasper, are more conservative, he gives greater prominence to authors who call the virginal conception a *theologoumenon*—a term he interprets as generally meaning "a theological narrative that does not represent a historical event." As a believer Meier presumably accepts the virginal conception, but as a historian he cannot take account of supernatural explanations. Since he limits himself to the human and the empirical, he can give only a weak response to the charge that Jesus was Mary's illegitimate child.

On the ground that the resurrection is knowable only by faith, Meier contends that it falls beyond the scope of a historical study of Jesus. Others of us would maintain that even if the resurrection in its full reality transcends the grasp of history, it has a historical aspect, and that historical research can help to establish the fact that Jesus did rise from the dead. If the resurrection was something that happened to Jesus, and not simply to the community, its occurrence would seem to be pertinent to the history of Jesus. The fact of the resurrection casts a whole new light on the previous career of Jesus and gives credibility to sayings and deeds that might otherwise be written off as legend.

Meier repeatedly reminds his readers that he is not denying faith and revelation, only putting them in brackets. To judge from early reviews of his book, non-Christians may find that Meier's attitude toward Jesus is not as neutral as he declares it to be. Christian believers, on the other hand, will wonder whether Meier the believer would disagree with Meier the historian. What would he say about the career of Jesus if he took his faith out of brackets? Perhaps in some other work Meier will find an opportunity to say how his account of the history of Jesus would differ if he were to avail himself of faith.

This separationist view has some plausibility, because as Christians we do assent to transcendent realities not knowable apart from faith in God's word. History by itself cannot establish that Jesus is reigning in heavenly glory or that he makes himself present in the Eucharist. But, as even Meier himself would probably admit, no *total* separation between history and faith is feasible. Most Catholic Christians consider themselves committed as believers to profess various facts about the earthly Jesus. While no official list is available, a good case can be made for including items such as the virginal conception of Jesus, his consciousness of his own divinity, his miraculous and prophetic powers, his redemptive intent, his institution of the Eucharist, his crucifixion, his empty tomb, and his bodily resurrection. If facts such as these were disproved, Christian faith would be seriously affected.

Recognizing the importance of these matters for faith, the Church has considered itself obliged to defend the historical value of the Gospels. Vatican Council II, following up on several earlier pronouncements, taught that the Gospels, "whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully hand on what Jesus the Son of God, while living among men, really did and taught" (*Dei Verbum*). The position on faith and history that severs the links between them fails to account for the Church's concern for the historicity of the Gospels.

According to the third major approach, history is itself the ground of faith. That is to say, historical investigation establishes rational foundations for the commitment of Christian faith. This position has been developed in at least three different forms.

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The first is exemplified by many apologists of the early twentieth century, including Hilarin Felder and Louis Claude Fillion. Taking up the challenge of the rationalists, they argued that the Gospels, viewed as strictly historical sources, could provide conclusive proofs that Jesus claimed to be, and in fact was, the only-begotten Son of God.

These authors used a rather naive approach, ignoring what most scholars of our own day hold about the authorship, date, and literary form of the Gospels. As a result, the work of these apologists is no longer convincing. More recent apologists, such as Joachim Jeremias, take a much more sophisticated approach to the Gospels and therefore make more modest claims. Jeremias argues persuasively that Jesus was conscious of having a relationship of singular intimacy with God as his Father. But it is hard to say that his arguments give more than a high probability that could be upset by further research. Few Christians would want their faith to depend on scholarly hypotheses such as these.

The second form of the view that history is the ground of faith is the so-called "new quest for the historical Jesus," instituted in the late 1950s. Several former students of Bultmann, rebelling against his divorce between faith and history, made use of a kind of existential history and tried to recreate an experience of encounter with Jesus on the basis of the earliest Gospel traditions. The works of Günther Bornkamm, Heinz Zahrnt, and James M. Robinson, representative of this school, may still be read with profit.

These works succeed in achieving an impressive picture of Jesus based on the texts that have good claims to historical reliability. The members of this school, however, limit their quest to Jesus as he presented himself in his public life. They do not incorporate the further light given to the community by the events of Easter and Pentecost. Their work, like that of Jeremias, must be regarded as a helpful beginning that can put the reader on the road toward eventually accepting the Christ of faith.

The third form of this position is represented by Wolfhart Pannenberg. For him history is the only mode of access to the reality of the past; faith gives no information in addition to history. But he defines history in a very comprehensive sense, so that it is capable of discerning the action of God. Pannenberg finds that the event of Jesus Christ, when interpreted in its own historical context, must be seen as the work of God himself, ushering in the final age of the world. Because the resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact, says Pannenberg, historical reasoning can exhibit Jesus as the self-revelation of God.

Pannenberg avoids the simplistic arguments of earlier apologists. He takes a highly critical approach to the Gospels and does not admit the historicity of the virginal conception. But he does affirm the historicity of the empty tomb and of at least some post-resurrection appearances. Thus he arrives at a more complete Christology than is obtainable by the existential history of the "new quest."

Some difficulties may nevertheless be raised. Pannenberg's comprehensive concept of history is so broad that it deprives history of its character as a special discipline. But even in this inclusive sense, history does not seem to terminate in a firm intellectual commitment, higher than the fluctuating judgments of probability. Many theologians, among whom I count myself, would say that the historical arguments for the divinity of Jesus will not provide the full assurance of faith except for those who submit to the attraction and illumination of divine grace. With this reservation, however, I find great value in Pannenberg's argumentation.

Finally, there is the fourth position, the most satisfactory. This position holds that Christian faith does not normally arise from, or rest on, a critical examination of the New Testament evidence concerning the Jesus of history. Rather, it comes from God's revealing word as conveyed by the testimony of the Church. But since the word of God tells us something about past events, faith cannot be insulated from history in the broad sense of the term.

The Gospels are not merely, or primarily, works of history. Above all else they are Gospels—that is to say, proclamations of the good news of God's saving action in Jesus Christ. They are religious testimonies, composed for the sake of arousing and strengthening the life of faith. Richly charged with theological interpretation, they give us much deeper insight into the real meaning of Jesus than stenographic reports about him could ever do.

Because they are written with a kerygmatic and pastoral concern, the Gospels should not be judged as though they were intended to be merely factual reports. The believer cannot say a priori that every Gospel narrative is an exact account of the event. The story of Jesus has been reworked in the light of the Church's Easter faith, and then further adapted to meet the needs of the particular communities for which the four Gospels were written. According to the 1964 Instruction of the Biblical Commission, modern scholarship makes it evident that "the doctrine and life of Jesus were not simply reported for the sole purpose of being remembered, but were 'preached' so as to offer the Church a basis of faith and morals." The biblical interpreter, says the instruction, must seek to explain why the different evangelists narrated the life and words of Jesus in different ways.

If they had been intended simply as historical works, the Gospels could be judged deficient. They

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do not satisfy our curiosity about many points. For example, they give us no description of Jesus and no exact chronology of his life. They recast many of his sayings, rearrange them into continuous discourses, combine distinct events into a single story, and take other liberties that would be unacceptable in academic history.

It is therefore legitimate and possible to probe behind the Gospels and try to reconstruct a more accurate and detailed account of the career of Jesus. For Christian believers, the intention of the quest will not be to detract from the teaching of the New Testament but rather to provide additional data and thereby give a better understanding both of Christ and of the Gospels.

The Christian believer will use many of the same procedures as the neutral or hostile historiographer. Catholic and Protestant scholars, without prejudice to their faith, make use of textual criticism, source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, literary criticism, and historical criticism. It is essential to obtain reliable texts, to identify their literary genre, and to single out the more primitive strata of material. The properly historical phase comes with the movement from the texts, considered as data, to the words and deeds to which they refer. Applying criteria such as early attestation, multiple attestation, and discontinuity from late Judaism and from early Christianity, the historian can make more or less probable judgments about the reliability of the accounts.

It must be recognized, however, that judgments of historicity depend in great part upon presumptions. Even those who try to bracket their faith have to use some presumptions about the kinds of reports that are to be viewed as credible. Because of differing presuppositions, some historians will admit, and others will discount, the antecedent possibility of revelation and miracles. In the area of religion, these presuppositions make all the difference. Believers who want to recover the full truth about Jesus will wish to take advantage of the light that faith can supply. They will not assume, even for purposes of the argument, that Jesus was less than faith declares him to be. To adopt such artificial restrictions would seriously prejudice the results. As John Henry Newman wrote in his critique of the apologetics of William Paley,

> Rules of court are dictated by what is expedient on the whole and in the long run; but they run the risk of being unjust to the claims of particular cases. Why am I to begin with taking up a position not my own, and unclothing my mind of that large outfit of existing thoughts, principles, likings, desires, and hopes, which make me what I am?

Christians, convinced that Jesus was an utterly singular person, the incarnate Son of God, will be prepared to credit testimony that God acted in him in a totally unprecedented way. Faith is an advantage because it alerts us to the particular strand of history in which God has acted decisively for our salvation. But faith does not eliminate the need for scholarly inquiry. Certain kerygmatic and theological ingredients have to be filtered out by the critic who wishes to reconstruct what was actually said and done by Jesus in his earthly career.

Historical method, when applied to the Gospel materials, has not yet led to a broad or striking consensus. Most historians can agree about a few general features of the public ministry of Jesus and the fact of his execution by the Roman authorities. But the different perspectives on the relationship between history and faith will lead to radically different views on matters of doctrinal significance. Even historians who share the same faith disagree about many details, such as the time and place at which Jesus was born, the duration of his public ministry, his messianic or divine claims, his intent to establish a Church, the dates of his Last Supper and of the crucifixion. Different historians will provide different theories and argue for them as best they can.

Of what use, then, is this historical investigation, conducted in the light of faith? Four main values come to mind.

First, on many points qualified historians will be able to supplement the information that could be gathered without reliance on their technical skills. They can give us probable answers to many questions that are not settled, one way or the other, by faith and theology. For example, they may be able to tell us whether the Matthean or the Lukan form of the Beatitudes or the Lord's Prayer is closer to the actual words of Jesus, and whether it is likely that the Last Supper was celebrated as a Paschal meal. History may be able to clarify Jesus' attitudes on social and political questions such as war and revolution, the rights of women and the poor. On these and many other debatable questions historical investigation provides probable answers that are of interest.

Second, by identifying certain elements in the Gospel as historically factual, the historian can on some points confirm the faith of believers. Solid arguments can be made for holding that Jesus understood himself as bringing in the final age of salvation, that he chose apostles to share in his ministry during and after his own life, that he placed Peter at the head of the apostles, that he understood himself as having a singular intimacy with his heavenly Father, that he regarded his own death as redemptive, and that he was convinced that the Father would raise him from the dead. The figure

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of Jesus reconstructed by technical history, incomplete and tentative though it be, can be helpful to people who are inquiring into the credibility of the Christian religion.

Third, critical study of the Gospels enables us to distinguish more clearly between the competences of faith and history. In some cases historical investigation stands in tension with the teaching of the Church. For example, some serious scholars, including Catholics, think that the strictly historical evidence does not favor the virginal conception of Jesus or the perpetual virginity of Mary. Even if these scholars are correct, the difficulties that they raise can be taken in stride. For Catholics and, I suspect, most other Christians, faith does not rest on historical research but on the word of God authoritatively proclaimed by Scripture and tradition. As Newman said, no doctrine of the Church can be rigorously proved by history. In some cases the historical evidence may seem to point away from the Catholic doctrines. "In all cases," Newman concluded, "there is a margin left for faith in the word of the Church. He who believes the dogmas of the Church only because he has reasoned them out of History, is scarcely a Catholic."

Fourth, historical study of the New Testament may, finally, contribute to the better understanding of faith and assist in the development of Christian doctrine. According to Vatican II, the work of exegetes is one of the means through which the judgment of the Church comes to maturity. An instance of this may be the case of Jesus' knowledge and self-consciousness. Theologians of earlier centuries often spoke of Jesus' infused knowledge in such a way as to suggest that he did not need to learn from other people, from books, or from experience. Modern biblical scholarship has helped to correct this view, and has enabled us to make the psychology of Jesus more intelligible.

Thoughtful Christians in our day are anxious to take advantage of modern historical research. Many look to Catholic biblical scholars to show how new findings in this area cohere with Catholic faith and teaching. But their expectations are disappointed when exegetes pursue their scientific investigations without regard for faith and theology. Has the gap between theology and biblical scholarship become so wide that each must be pursued without reference to the other? I am confident that faith and intelligence, dogma and history, can and must be integrated. Historical scholarship, if it erects itself into a purely positive discipline independent of philosophy and faith, can only widen the gap. But, conducted in dialogue with philosophy and theology, the historical quest can cast added light on the reality of Christ. FT

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Messianic Jews: A Troubling Presence

Isaac C. Rottenberg

When it comes to Christian-Jewish relations, particularly Christian-Jewish dialogue, the most sensitive issues of all, of course, are those of mission and conversion. Thus those of us Christians who are seriously engaged in such dialogue need to be particularly sensitive about conduct on our part that could even remotely be interpreted as being missionary in nature.

At the same time, the question as to what constitutes "authentic Christian witness," particularly vis-à-vis our Jewish interlocutors, is as unavoidable as it is unresolved for us. From time to time assemblies of major denominations, in the course of discussing pronouncements about Christian attitudes toward Jews, have come close to concluding that Jews ought to be exempted from any Christian outreach. In the end, however, it would seem that the imperatives of the gospel prohibited them from going so far: the missionary mandate was maintained, albeit—practically speaking—in a state of dormancy.

Recently Dr. Michael Kogan, writing in the *National Dialogue Newsletter* (Winter 1990-91), proposed that we move toward something called "total dialogue," that is, risk the vulnerability of "expos[ing] one's own community's beliefs to influence by the other in a mutual enrichment process." This proposal has inevitably evoked a good deal of debate, raising once again as it does the issues of conversion and mission. Invited by the editor of the newsletter to contribute a few observations on the idea of "total dialogue," I myself decided to up Dr. Kogan's ante by adding a further complication: "To exclude from the dialogue *as a class*," I declared, "all Jews who confess Jesus as Messiah in the Christian sense is wrong, as wrong as any other violation of people's conscience." My comment was accompanied by an editorial stating that such a position would lead to the "overnight destruction of dialogue," because people like Jews for Jesus insist on engaging in proselytizing activities toward their own people.

By coincidence, just around the same time, David Novak's article "When Jews Are Christians" appeared in the November 1991 issue of FIRST THINGS. In it, Novak warned that the progress made in Jewish-Christian relationships could be jeopardized because of a "new type of Jewish convert to Christianity," namely, one who claims to remain a Jew while accepting Jesus as the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world. Arguing that the views of Messianic Jews are a problem both to the Jewish and the Christian communities, the author pointed out that a sympathetic hearing for these views on the part of church leaders could well cause difficulties for those Jews who have precisely been the strongest supporters of Christian-Jewish dialogue.

The complexities involved in this situation—theological, historical, and psychological—are clearly immense and may not be possible to overcome. In addition, there is often even no common language in which to discuss the problem. Take, for instance, the terms "a follower of Jesus" and "a convert to Christianity." Some Jewish Christians accept the former designation, but assiduously avoid the latter because to them it seems to imply that

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they embrace all of historic "Christendom." By focusing on Jesus, they can retain a critical stance toward much that goes by the name of "Christianity."

There is also the question as to whether a Messianic Jew is by definition someone who confesses Jesus as Messiah. Some Jewish Christians do not wish to define themselves in those terms; they are content to be known as Christians, period. But what if those same people still claim to remain Jews? Such is clearly the position of Aaron Jean-Marie Lustiger, archbishop of Paris. In his book *Dare to Believe* (1986), he is reluctant to discuss his decision to be baptized in the Catholic Church—out of a desire to avoid provocation. However, when pushed by reporters, he is most emphatic about his conviction that he has not ceased to be a Jew. "I am discovering another way of being Jewish," he reports having told his parents, because to him Christianity is "a natural extension of Judaism."

If the status of Cardinal Lustiger presents a problem to Jews, even more problematic, not only to Jews but to many Christians as well, is what could be called "the organized Messianic Jewish community"—Jewish Christians who form separate Messianic congregations, observe the Jewish Sabbath, continue many Jewish practices, and celebrate certain Jewish festivals. Such congregations have also organized themselves into national and international networks, such as the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA), the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC), the Messianic Jewish Movement International, etc. Then there is Jews for Jesus, a separate organization with its own agenda and constituency. The same is true of various Hebrew-Christian mission societies. A monthly, *The Messianic Times*, reports on items of interest to all these groups. As an increasingly organized community with a strong missionary thrust, such groups are sometimes viewed as a major threat to Jewish-Christian rapprochement.

There have been periods in history when the problem of Christianity for Jews was very much focused on Jesus. He, as the central figure of the Christian faith, became the great symbol of all the evil that had been perpetrated against Jews in his name. It was not uncommon for pious Jews to spit in disgust at the mere mention of that name.

Much has changed in this respect. Jesus, as a Jew who was faithful to Torah, has become a figure with whom many Jews have become quite comfortable. He is seen as "one of ours." As a matter of fact, many students today are gaining profound insights into Jesus through the large and rich body of literature on the subject by Jewish authors. The line, to be sure, is drawn at the Christian belief in Jesus as Son of God.

As it is on the question of conversion. It is always difficult for faith communities to see one of their own convert to another religion. But a Jew converting to Christianity has often been experienced by Jews as particularly painful. Not only has the Jewish community historically had a profound sense of peoplehood, but it has also been a minority community regularly subjected to persecutions in which, one way or another, Christians have played a part. So in the case of a conversion there has not only been a painful sense of loss to the community, but a bitter sense of betrayal as well. Moreover, the fact that expediency sometimes played a role in a Jew's decision to convert didn't make things any easier. Assimilated Jews were usually despised because they tried so desperately to be just like gentiles.

Today, the Jewish community is confronted with a very different kind of conversion problem, namely that of converts who, having embraced Christianity, seem to feel a greater need than before to accentuate their Jewishness, sometimes even to the point of Judaizing their names. In many cases these people are well-educated members of the yuppie generation, determined to raise their children as Christians with a strong sense of Jewish identity. They appear to want to flaunt what assimilated Jews of previous generations often sought to hide.

Ironically, it is precisely their desire to retain a Jewish identity and to maintain certain aspects of the tradition of their forebears that often is turned against them, leading to accusations that all this is a ploy, part of a covert and deceptive missionary strategy whereby they seek to seduce other Jews to forsake their faith as well. For centuries the Jewish community has had to struggle to maintain its faith in the midst of an often hostile gentile world or in the face of the Church's missionary efforts. But the movement of Messianic Jews must look to many like a fifth-column assault.

Permit me here to introduce my own experience, which has offered me a very special vantage point from which to view some of the perplexities of this most perplexing issue. My wife and I both grew up in Dutch Reformed homes. Our fathers were not only committed church members, but professional workers. Our youthful experiences in life were by and large typical of Dutch Reformed children in the Netherlands, even though my grandfather was an Hasidic rabbi in Poland and my father a convert to Christianity, while her father had been a socialist activist in that same country who had also converted. We were never really part of the Jewish experience—until the Nazis made us so.

Hitler and his cohorts reminded us constantly about "the blood in our veins." They made us part of one of the most traumatic experiences in all of Jewish history. My father was arrested as a Jew who

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had written books critical of Nazism and, after spending some time in Buchenwald, he was murdered in Mauthausen. When Jewish children put on a show for International Red Cross executives who came to inspect Adolf Eichmann's "Paradeise ghetto" Terezin (Theresienstadt), my wife was there and her younger sisters were part of the group that so famously performed "The Tales of the Vienna Woods." So you might say some experience of "Jewishness" had come into both our lives, almost in spite of our upbringing—and along with it, a sense of ambiguity about being at the same time part of a people's history but basically still "outsiders."

We have never talked much about these experiences, certainly not among the wide circle of our Jewish friends and acquaintances. Not only would it somehow seem an intrusion, but we have no desire, either, to join the ever-growing band of Christian Holocaust specialists. Thus it has been granted us to live and work at the borderline of the Jewish experience and the Christian encounter with that experience.

This will explain the impulse behind my comment to the *National Dialogue Newsletter.* I have come to feel increasingly uneasy about a certain current tendency to characterize converts from Judaism as people of questionable integrity.

None will deny that the greater the fervor to convert others, the stronger may be the temptation to engage in questionable missionary tactics. Nor can serious Christians oppose the idea that there should be a constant critical evaluation of Christian evangelistic methods and practices. Converts (to almost any kind of movement) tend to be highly aggressive in their attempts to persuade others. The prophetic-apostolic witness too knows of an inner imperative to speak, a mandate to proclaim. "If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak anymore in his name,' there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot" (Jeremiah 20:9). "Necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16). Sometimes it can be a bit uncomfortable to be confronted by a zealous convert.

Certainly all of us must be prepared to listen to the critiques of other faith communities, and especially those of our Jewish brothers and sisters. But critical analysis also requires that we avoid quick and easy answers, particularly if they are motivated more by feelings of guilt about past sins than by faith commitments.

In this connection, the word "proselytizing" ought to be used with some care. It tends to be applied in an indiscriminate fashion, and not seldom with an implied negative connotation, so that by simply stating that someone engages in proselytism, one can implicitly be making a moral judgment.

Historically, the word "proselytism" did not necessarily carry such baggage. Highly respected Jewish scholars, like Dr. Bernard Bamberger (*Proselytism in the Talmudic Period,* 1939) and Dr. William C. Braude (*Jewish Proselytizing in the First Five Centuries of the Common Era,* 1940) have used the term quite unapologetically. Building on their research, Rabbi Ely E. Pilchik felt that he was in the spirit of ancient Jewish tradition when he wrote the following—to many, no doubt controversial—sentences: "We need numbers. We need more Jews lest we wither and disappear. We need proselytes. We need to win over Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Shintos, and other 'goyim' to Judaism" (*The Jewish Week,* December 24, 1981). This was not meant as a Christmas Eve threat; it was meant as a call to righteousness and concern about the future of the Jewish people in the post-Holocaust era.

Still, in the minds of many, proselytizing has become a code word for unethical missionary practices, implying coercion, deceit, and even bribery. The Catholic scholar Tommaso Federici, in an important 1978 address, defined rather carefully what he meant by the word, namely "attitudes and activities engaged in outside Christian witness . . . anything which infringes or violates the right of every person or community not to be subjected to external or internal constraints in religious matters . . . ." Judging by such a standard, it becomes a bit more difficult to object to any kind of evangelization as unethical.

David Novak, in the aforementioned article, does not confine himself to quick brush-offs with terms like "proselytism" or "deception" as he presents his case for why Messianic Jews could pose a threat to the future of Jewish-Christian dialogue. Rather, he offers a theological analysis in order to explain why these people, although according to normative Judaism still to be considered Jews, are not justified in making their claims. Today's Messianic Jews, says Professor Novak, should be compared to the (heretical) "syncretists of the second and third centuries," not to the first Jewish Christians (with whom they often compare themselves). At one time it may have been plausible to view Christianity as a form of Judaism, runs this argument, but a long and eventful history, including the history of Christian doctrinal formulations (e.g., "Jesus as the incarnate Son of God, the second person of the Trinity"), makes that now impossible.

Novak is concerned that churches might come to accept the self-definition of Messianic Jews, which in turn would arouse the suspicion among the Jewish partners in dialogue that their Christian counterparts silently condone a new form of proselytizing aimed specifically at Jews. Thus the

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mission/witness issue which, at least in the "mainline" churches, had been largely but not entirely dormant, is once again moved to the forefront of Christian-Jewish relations.

One statement in Novak's article is particularly striking. He points out that, according to the Pauline principle that "in Christ there is no Jew or Greek," the Church has expected Jews to become what could be called "regular members," just like all the other members. As a matter of fact, he then adds, Jewish converts to Christianity themselves almost always "accepted the Church's definition of their new status. They no longer regarded themselves as Jews and were often quite vehement in repudiating their former identity."

Here we remind ourselves that in the Middle Ages it was quite common for church authorities to force Jews to publicly renounce their heritage before accepting them into the Church. We know the formula: "I do here and now renounce every rite and observance of the Jewish religion, detesting all its solemn ceremonies and tenets that in former days I kept and held." In short, a "good convert" was one who had totally abandoned his/her Jewish identity.

But in more recent times it has become recognized in Christian circles, missionary circles in particular, that our blindness to the need for contextualization of the gospel has been one of the biggest mistakes the Church has made in its worldwide outreach. The Christian message must be incorporated into the life and culture of the peoples to whom it is addressed, be it in Africa, Asia, or wherever. It has now become clear that the approach followed previously was unfortunately tainted by a certain ecclesiastical imperialism. A "good convert" was often portrayed as a person well acculturated to our Western ways. Missionary success stories were frequently about "native" evangelists who acted, talked, and even dressed like British Methodists or American Southern Baptists. Jews too were usually most welcome if they adjusted to our churchly ways.

Today the situation is quite different. The need for contextualization is widely recognized, and consequently the development of ethnically oriented churches is not only condoned, but actively encouraged. Even in the United States we see a growing number of Korean Presbyterian churches, Reformed Taiwanese churches, and the like. Each of these Christian communities is recognized as being unique in its own way, and yet all are seen as part of the one Body of the Church.

As it happens, discussions about the preservation of Jewish identity within the Church and the pros and cons of establishing separate Hebrew-Christian congregations have been going on for many years now. In the rather extensive body of literature produced by Jewish converts to Christianity one finds all sorts of questions raised, including questions about the early formulations of Christian doctrine. As the U.S. Catholic bishops pointed out in one of their pronouncements, a process of de-Judaization of the Christian faith started very early in its history. Elements of the Hellenistic thought world were introduced, and in many cases Christian theological expression became quite dependent on Greek metaphysical categories.

We know why this happened and how it helped communicate the gospel to the Greco-Roman world. But we also know that the process of de-Judaization eventually became a handy tool in the hands of those who advocated an anti-Judaic theology. After all, the biblical revelation came to humanity in Hebrew context; in order to learn to "spell the Name," it is important that one be able to enter into Hebrew thought. Yet for many Jewish converts the Christian theological climate never seemed very hospitable, nor have they always felt "at home" in our local congregations.

The Church for its part has its own difficulties with trying to determine what constitutes an "authentic witness" vis-à-vis Jewish neighbors. Jews as Jews are not outside the orbit of revelation. Quite the contrary, they are the people of the covenant in whose midst the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob made himself known and revealed his Name. A growing number of denominations have confessed that they were wrong when, over a long history, they taught a replacement form of theology and contributed to the sufferings of the Jewish people. In light of that history, it is no wonder that many church leaders are inclined to pause before proposing ambitious missionary schemes. In the words of Professor Krister Stendahl, they tend to hold "the missionary urge to convert Israel . . . in check." For most of them, however, this whole situation is experienced as a dilemma, because, with few exceptions, these church leaders also agree with someone like Professor Gabriel Fackre who, in a commentary on the 1987 United Church of Christ document on the Church and the Jewish people, declared quite unequivocally: "Antisupersessionism does not forbid sharing the Gospel with Jewish people." The question is, how do we do that, while honoring the continuing covenant of God with Israel?

The apostle Paul was not yet burdened by the history that so heavily weighs upon the churches. But in his missionary outreach he faced some of the same questions that we must confront today. For instance, he never lost sight of the distinction between those who know Torah and those who do not, even when he argued their equal status before God . . . as people in need of forgiveness. Jews and gentiles live in a different thought-world; they raise different questions, because they do not share

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the same expectations. Take, for instance, a passage like 1 Corinthians 1:18-31: "Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified. . . ." Jews know Torah. Their expectations about future redemption have always been closely related to historical reality. They want to know where the empirical evidence is to be found that the Messianic age has been inaugurated. How can the message of Christ crucified reveal the power of the Kingdom? Hence the challenge to preach the gospel in such a way that it does not preclude a theology of history and culture. The New Testament does that by emphasizing the cosmic dimensions of a biblical Christology.

The Greeks, on the other hand, seek wisdom. Their fundamental vision is one of world harmony. Hence, the message of the cross seemed, from the perspective of their philosophical presuppositions, a rather foolish idea.

But in terms of guilt before God, Paul sees both Jews and gentiles in need of the same grace. Similar ideas can be found in other passages. Romans 1:18 - 2:29 is an example. Those who are outside the orbit of revelation of the God of Israel, who do not know Torah, are tempted to deify the cosmos. Instead of glorifying God, who has revealed himself as Creator, they tend to worship their own images (1:23). Jews know better. But, as Paul sees it, they too are without excuse (2:1), because their actions do not conform to the demands of the law, and hence they stand guilty before God and are in need of redemption. So in the end Paul finds the answer for the predicament of both Jew and gentile in Christ's fulfillment of the law, an obedience he interprets as an act of redemption.

Still, he is deeply aware of the dangers that loom on the horizon as soon as the Church loses sight of the mystery of the calling of Israel, a theme he develops in the much-discussed chapters Romans 9-11. Triumphalism takes over; the branches that have become ingrafted into the tree of God's covenant with the people of Israel forget that they do not support the root; the root supports them (11:18).

Paul could hardly have imagined how his fears would play out on the stage of subsequent history. Now, almost 2,000 years later, we know what that kind of triumphalism has led to. To the inherent offense of the cross were added offenses that were rooted in the sins of the churches. And so for many Jews the thought of any Christian witness directed at them is scandalous. The late Rabbi Pinchas Peli raised a protest against missionary activities that was both sharp and direct: "What they are doing is something that cannot be pardoned, cannot be forgiven, especially in Israel, especially after the Holocaust. We have not yet settled our account with Christianity as it is. One doesn't need to add insult to injury, and try to take us away from our religion."

And so we live in the tension field between our own *peccavi* and the gospel imperative to witness to all humankind. The missionary mandate is not denied, but in practice the issue is often surrounded by an embarrassed silence.

Enter the Messianic Jews, filled with the missionary élan of new converts, more than vocal in spreading the word about their new-found faith in Jesus, sometimes even taking out full-page advertisements in major newspapers. No closet Christians they. They do not see themselves as "targeting" a special group "out there" for their witness, because for them the confrontation normally starts among their immediate family, relatives, and friends, and then spreads through the broader community of which they still feel themselves a part, albeit perhaps in a state of estrangement.

How to respond to these realities? David Novak undoubtedly speaks for the great majority of Jews when he writes that Christians cannot expect them to accept any notion that Messianic Jews might serve as "a unique link between the Jewish people and the Church." However, from the Christian point of view it could well be argued that the idea of such a link ought to be explored. If Hebrew-Christians were to introduce a more Hebraic mode of thinking into our often Hellenized ways of doing theology, the Church could benefit greatly. For decades we have been struggling to develop a prophetic-messianic vision, an eschatology that includes both expectancy and social responsibility, that would help us break out of our sterile either-or theological constructions and ideological preoccupations.

In our search for a vision of the future, we have traveled from fad to fad; from ahistorical existentialist theologies to theologies of revolution; from post-Christian celebrations of the secular city to the establishment of peace, justice, and liberation bureaucracies that are ever itching to be prophetic if denominations will provide secure financial support, even in some cases to the point of assessing (i.e., taxing) their membership for the "service." The churches desperately need a theology of the Kingdom of God that incorporates the broad historical and cosmic themes of the Hebrew Scriptures and apostolic writings.

Can Messianic Jews serve as a link in such matters? Potentially, I would say, "yes." Still, as of now there seems to be little reason to be optimistic on that point. In many instances their thinking seems to be permeated by Christian otherworldliness. Much of their piety is imbued with a "precious Jesus" Messianism that lacks a broad historical vision. The type of fundamentalism that many Messianic Jews have embraced has much to say about the soul (often in very Hellenistic terms), spiritualizing the gospel message so as to virtually empty it of its social-

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political implications. In short, to me all this sounds too much like more of the un-Hebraic dualistic mode of thinking that the Church needs to overcome. Furthermore, when a historical perspective is presented, it is often so charged with the hype found among some of the television prophecy preachers that a calm discussion of biblical theology becomes almost impossible.

Still, isolation without conversation cannot be the answer. Messianic Jews are part of the Church, a fellowship in which many differences coexist within a community of common faith. Potentially they have something important to contribute to the whole Church. Nobody's interest is served by pushing them to become an increasingly sectarian movement. True, some of their present isolation may well be self-imposed. Perhaps there is an element of clannishness involved. Honesty, however, demands that we look deeper than that. The fact that these people often see themselves as "twice exiled," rejected by their old home and not entirely welcome in their new one, requires our serious consideration.

Among evangelicals, who by and large do not experience mission, including mission to Jews, as much of a dilemma, one finds a measure of openness toward Messianic Jews. Since the evangelicals' dialogue with the Jewish community is less developed than that of the Christian "mainstream," they also feel less pressure to protect contacts that have been cultivated over a long period of time.

Still, evangelicals who are strong supporters of the State of Israel, even though they may have positive personal feelings toward Messianic Jews, are often inclined to tone down their churches' mission theology and to keep cautiously quiet about any contacts they may have with them. The reason is quite simple: they are eager to maintain their close ties with Jewish leaders, both here and in Israel. Consequently, they are caught between conflicting loves and loyalties.

All in all one senses a good deal of ambivalence in the evangelical community at large about the Messianic Jewish movement. Theologically there may be a feeling of kinship, but on the level of community life there often is a hesitation about the otherness of the other. If dialogue is based on I-thou relationships rather than the absorption of one party into the other, if dialogue means expectant openness to mutual transformation, then it would seem that the evangelical and Messianic Jewish movements have a long way to go.

The "mainline" Christian-Jewish dialogue movement is quite another story. Some of the leading theologians in those circles tend to see a closer link between their faith and traditional Judaism than between them and Messianic Jews. Of course, they also have made a greater effort to develop contacts and exchange views with the Jewish community. Messianic Jews usually are seen as a disturbing, even threatening, element in the mix of Christian-Jewish relations, and hence they frequently evoke feelings of hostility.

Participants in the "mainstream" dialogue have reached a virtual consensus that no true dialogue is possible with anyone who may give even the slightest indication of believing that the answer to life's mysteries in the final analysis is to be found in his/her religious tradition. That, they say, is the true mark of triumphalism and means the death of dialogue. Nevertheless, these same people express a desire to reach out to Islam, even though there is no reason to believe that Jewish-Christian-Muslim conversations presently can be conducted on the basis of a "theology of equality."

No doubt, truth claims can complicate dialogue, but do they necessarily lead to the death of dialogue? All forms of ecumenical and interfaith dialogue were born when, in a general atmosphere of polemics and antithetical positions, some pioneers persisted in listening to each other even though their differences seemed insuperable. On the other hand, the death of dialogue may well be caused by indifference about fundamental beliefs that historically have been seen as touching on people's eternal destiny.

At the moment we are facing a stand-off. Some of our Jewish partners want the issue of Messianic Jews on the agenda under the category of a "threat to dialogue." Some Christian advocates of improved relations with the Jewish community, for a variety of reasons, find avoidance (if not rejection) of Messianic Jews an acceptable position, at least until the latter tone down their enthusiasm to share their new-found faith with others. Messianic Jews themselves, while often eager to portray themselves as potentially a creative link between Judaism and the Christian faith, may—also for a variety of reasons—prefer to make those claims "from a distance," i.e., without making a real effort to contribute to a climate in which such issues can be explored. So, we end up with the worst of all possible dialogical worlds. All the parties seem stuck in their own peculiar fundamentalism.

Where will new incentives come from? The history of religious bodies shows that new initiatives usually come from pioneers who are prepared to probe the boundaries of establishment positions and establishment politics (including the politics of dialogue), people who are ready to take the risk of utilizing all the valuable lessons that have been learned during the past decades of interfaith encounters.

Issues raised by Messianic Jews today have deep roots in church history, going back to apostolic times. They deserve to be discussed, rather than

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summarily dismissed as mere repetitions of ancient heresies. Christians engaged in conversations with Messianic Jews ought not to be considered a threat to the ongoing Christian-Jewish dialogue, unless they say or do things that clearly are inimical to the integrity of interfaith relationships. Whether or not this is the case ought not be determined exclusively in terms of the politics of dialogue, but also, or perhaps even more so, in terms of the moral-spiritual values embedded in our faith.

Religious communities recognize a variety of callings. This is also the case within the context of interfaith dialogue. What we do not need are adversarial postures between people who feel called to explore different areas of dialogue. Maintaining links to both the Jewish and the Messianic communities will require a considerable dose of graceful sensitivity as well as a bit of political savvy. Only Christians who have honestly and humbly confronted the history of the Christian-Jewish experience should apply.

Dialogue, by its very nature, is an open process, always prepared to respond to new challenges. All new ventures in ecumenical and interfaith endeavors tend to start out as impossible dreams. The status quo never is good enough, least of all to those who have had long practice in the often painful process of dialogue and have tasted its fruits. FT

Christmas Carols in Traditional Sound

Let all the songs
On Christmas Day, play
And with heralding
Choristers sing, ring
The coming of
The heaven-sent,
Love-cradled King.

Christmas Carols in Jazz

Let the horns sound round,
The bass and drums beat sweet,
The keys tell well,
In rhythms neat,
The glory sound
Of God complete,
Immanuel.

Ross Blake

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The Pope and the Liberal State

Russell Hittinger

It is not hard to understand why when *Centesimus Annus* was issued in 1991, its economic teachings almost immediately received the most attention. For with respect both to substance and emphasis, *Centesimus* does represent a considerable development in papal social thought on economic matters.

In *Rerum Novarum* (1891), Leo XIII defended what he called the "stable and perpetual," "inviolable," and "sacred" right to private property (RN #6, 15, 46). Yet he was less interested in understanding the phenomenon of economic freedom on its own terms than he was in asserting moral and juridical principles necessary for answering the twin evils of unrestricted laissez-faire and state socialism. Pope John Paul II, however, evinces a more direct interest in the entrepreneurial spirit and in the moral value of "the modern business economy" (CA #32).

Moreover, John Paul II's stiff criticism of centralized command economies and his admonitions about the dangers of the welfare state have important implications for how papal social teaching must now be brought to bear upon economic policies in Eastern Europe, the Third World, and even in the developed nations where these issues are debated by prelates and the laity.

Though this revision in the papal approach to economic issues is undeniably important, nevertheless it is the Pope's view of the political state that represents the more important evolution in papal teaching since *Rerum Novarum*. *Centesimus*, indeed, is the first papal encyclical that treats the modern state as what recent history has taught us to recognize it to be: namely, a potentially dangerous concentration of coercive power requiring the most exacting juridical and structural limitations. Simply put, the political state depicted in *Centesimus Annus* is no longer the classical or medieval *civitas* assumed by John Paul II's predecessors.

The encyclicals of the Leonine papacy, for example, typically treated the state as a kind of prodigal child of Christendom that needs to be summoned once again by the Holy See to its proper responsibilities, albeit in the face of certain modern crises. But the state visualized by Pope Leo is still the premodern state, pictured as an organic *communitas perfecta*—in Leo's words, "some likeness and symbol as it were of the Divine Majesty, even when it is exercised by one unworthy" (*Sapientiae Christianae*, 1890, #9).

This conception of the political state is not John Paul II's. Not that, for him, the political state has no moral task, much less that the state is bereft of God-given norms. The state is repeatedly called to its moral responsibilities in *Centesimus*. Nonetheless, the Pope regards the state as more of an artificial construct, whose end it is to serve the legitimate economic and cultural interests of individuals and corporate entities that are not reducible to the state. This does not merely accommodate liberal political and legal institutions. Rather, it bespeaks a decisive, normative turn toward the liberal state. The key here is not whether the state has moral responsibilities, but the institutional and juridical limits on how the state may rightfully exercise those responsibilities.

II

At the very beginning of *Centesimus*, the Pope takes note of the historical context in which *Rerum Novarum* was promulgated. "In the sphere of politics the result of these changes was a new conception of society and of the state, and consequently of authority itself. A traditional society was

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passing away and another was beginning to be formed—one which brought the hope of new freedoms, but also the threat of new forms of injustice and servitude" (CA #4). The problem underscored here was not just Pope Leo's response to the economic crises engendered by industrialization, but a wider and deeper change in the relation between the state and society, and indeed in the understanding of authority itself. And the problem of "limits inherent in the nature of the state" (CA #11) is not only central to the Pope's exegesis of *Rerum Novarum*, but also to his assessment of the contemporary situation.

Pope Leo's treatment of the state relied upon the traditional language of natural law, that is, the Thomistic concept of natural law as a participation in the eternal law. All power of governance, Leo asserts, "emanate[s] from God" (*Diuturnum*, 1881, #12). It does not derive from consent or contract, much less from human rights, but from God "as from a natural and necessary principle" (D #5; but also in *Libertas Praestantissimum* [1888, #13, 17]; *Immortale Dei* [1885, #3-4]; RN #7, 52). Pope Leo describes the "necessary principle" as the eternal law, of which the natural law is our first participation in divine governance. This participationist scheme, moving from eternal to natural to human laws is, in its essentials, Thomistic. The first and most important limit upon the state is, as it were, from above rather than below.

The broad metaphysical and theological picture here is that of a divine commonwealth in which the political state can properly be described as under an imperative to imitate (however imperfectly) God (LP #33). And because the state is a "likeness and symbol as it were of the Divine Majesty" (SP #9), Pope Leo does not shrink from calling its ruling powers "sacred" (ID #18). The reference in *Rerum Novarum* to property rights as *iura sancta* notwithstanding, the principle *sanctum* in the order of political theory remained, for Pope Leo, the state as a participator in divine governance—even, as he says, when the power is exercised "by one unworthy." When citizens submit to the civil authority, they submit to divine authority (ID #18).

This point of view persisted, more or less explicitly, in papal encyclicals up to the present time—including what many would regard as the most modern of encyclicals, Pope John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* (1963). Citing Pius XII, Pope John maintained that "the dignity of the state's authority is due to its sharing to some extent in the authority of God himself" (#47).

While Pope John Paul is certainly correct when he says that the author of *Rerum Novarum* faced radical changes in the notion of authority, it is equally important to bear in mind that Pope Leo did not give an inch on the older formulation of the authority of the state. While he did have a keen appreciation for the potential tyranny of some modern states—incorporating the modern language of individual rights as one way to counter the tyranny of an unjust or disordered political regime and putting forth the notion of property as a *ius sanctum*—*Rerum Novarum* evinces no approval of what could be called (either then or now) "liberalism." It is worth recalling that the encyclical was issued less than forty years after Pope Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* (1854), which declared: "It is an error to believe that the Roman pontiff can or should reconcile himself to and agree with progress, liberalism, and modern civilization" (#69).

From all available evidence, Leo XIII regarded the *ius sanctum* of property as something implicit in the traditional moral and political theory of Thomas Aquinas. The right could be recognized, and indeed emphasized, without in any way conceding a "liberal" doctrine of the state. His main response, therefore, was to reassert the model of a divine commonwealth: in *Rerum Novarum* (#27) he expressly calls European peoples back to the "primal constitution" of Christian order, by which he means Christendom as a political entity, like "the institution of the Holy Roman Empire, [which] consecrated the political power in a wonderful manner" (D #22).

III

Centesimus Annus bespeaks a distinctly different historical and philosophical view. For one thing, the "image of God" in *Centesimus* is reserved for human persons, in contrast to the powers of the state:

> The root of modern totalitarianism is to be found in the denial of the transcendent dignity of the human person who, as the visible image of the invisible God, is therefore by his very nature the subject of rights which no one may violate—no individual, group, class, nation, or state. Not even the majority of a social body may violate these rights by going against the minority, by isolating, oppressing, or exploiting it, or by attempting to annihilate it (CA #44).

The important point here is John Paul II's refusal to drape any kind of theological mantle over the state. Nowhere in *Centesimus* is there any reference to the political state as in the image of divine governance. On the contrary, the political state tends to be described in forbidding terms. John Paul speaks pejoratively, for instance, of the "national security state," the "social assistance state," "state administration," "state capitalism" as "bureaucratic control" and as "secular religion" (CA #19, 48, 49, 35, 25). To be sure, this language is intended

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to refer to degraded and disordered aspects of the modern state. Still, Pope John Paul is extremely critical of the power of the political state—not so much as an abstract entity in political philosophy, but as a concrete historical reality.

Thus whereas Leo XIII was generally sanguine about the positive role of the political state, but cautious about modern economic developments, John Paul II is generally optimistic about the creative dynamism of the modern business economy, but palpably suspicious of the state. The reason for the divergence between them is hardly mysterious: Leo lived at the end of an era in which the authority of Christian princes was being challenged by secular ideologies and in which both socialism and radical laissez-faire practices were threatening the *civitas* as Leo knew it. John Paul, on the other hand, witnessed the emergence of totalitarian states that conducted a policy of "total war" within and without (CA #14). They obliterated, along with Christian culture, the conditions of economic development and the rule of law.

From John Paul's perspective, the modern state has not so much defaced the political image of divine governance vested in the civil authority as it has assaulted that image as it subsists in human persons. Hence where Leo was interested in reconnecting the civil authority to the proper understanding of divine governance under the eternal law, John Paul emphasizes the need to connect the state to a proper understanding of the human person. Whether in the areas of economics, law, or politics, he emphasizes and reemphasizes the teaching that the root cause of totalitarianism is a false anthropology (CA #11, 133).

How, in the view of John Paul, is the state to be limited? His most critical remarks about the welfare state are made in light of the principle of subsidiarity (CA #48, and also in #10, 15, 49), drawn not from Leo XIII but from Pius XI. He is exceedingly critical of top-heavy bureaucracies that, however well-intentioned, undermine local initiatives and responsibilities in economic matters. Interestingly, when *Centesimus* addresses the problem of the relation between the state and those who are poor and/or vulnerable, it speaks mainly of the responsibility to protect juridical rights (CA #10)—a notion markedly different from a responsibility to engage in administrative interventions. While the state has a responsibility to oversee and direct the exercise of economic rights, the "primary responsibility in this area belongs not to the state, but to individuals and to the various groups and associations which make up society" (#48). Significantly, the Pope maintains that the decentralization of power and responsibility promotes greater productivity and efficiency, "even though it may weaken consolidated power structures" (CA #43).

When he speaks of the "rule of law," however, he goes beyond the principle of subsidiarity. John Paul writes approvingly that Pope Leo XIII

> presents the organization of society according to the three powers—legislative, executive, and judicial—something which at the time represented a novelty in church teaching. Such an ordering reflects a realistic vision of man's social nature, which calls for legislation capable of protecting the freedom of all. To that end, it is preferable that each power be balanced by other powers and by other spheres of responsibility which keep it within proper bounds. This is the principle of the "rule of law" in which the law is sovereign, and not the arbitrary will of individuals.

Interestingly, sections 32-33 of *Rerum Novarum*, cited as evidence for this "novel" teaching, contain a quite different approach. Here, Pope Leo quotes Aquinas' dictum: "As the part and the whole are in a certain sense identical, so that which belongs to the whole in a sense belongs to the part." Read in context, this is not even remotely similar to John Paul's notion of limiting the state by means of pragmatic allocation and division of its powers, much less an equation between such an arrangement and the rule of law.

The check upon the power of the state is not drawn simply from an understanding of the hierarchical and organic distinction between the parts of the whole, but from a "realistic" understanding of structural limitations imposed upon institutions of the civil *potestas*. While the division of powers can be interpreted as something complementary to the older organic model, the equation of such structural limits with the "rule of law" is modern. It is modern not only with respect to its historical pedigree in eighteenth-century republicanism, but also with respect to its function: one speaks of the division of powers not to provide a picture of how the individual members are distinguished and fitted to the body but to ameliorate the potential abuses of power.

The structural division of the civil *potestas* is not a necessary metaphysical principle. It does not, as was claimed for the Marxist state, flow from a knowledge of "deeper laws," but has been learned by trial and error. Among the many philosophical errors John Paul attributes to modern totalitarians is that they took themselves to be "exempt from error." And in exempting themselves from error, they erected no structural safeguards to the misuse of civil power.

This is not for one moment to suggest either that John Paul II sees in the structural elements of the rule of law merely extrinsic compensation for

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human failure or that he recommends a merely neutral and proceduralist rule of law shorn of substantive notions of justice. "Authentic democracy," he warns, "is possible only in a state ruled by law *and* on the basis of a correct conception of the human person" (CA #46). Nor would his understanding of what is entailed in the "correct conception" be apt to satisfy a liberal proceduralist. Milton Friedman's remark that the Pope's emphasis upon obedience to the truths about God and man "sent shivers down my back" speaks for itself.

Even so, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that, however adamant about the importance of timeless truths, the encyclical clearly introduces the note of human fallibility with regard to political institutions. In the light of recent history, two problems in particular emerge in somewhat sharpened focus: the need, in economics, to protect nongovernmental initiatives, and the even more pressing need to set juridical limits to the power of the state. The Pope's turn toward a liberal model of the state is not shaped by any conscious adversion to the theories of Locke, Madison, or any of our great constitutional jurists. Forged in the crucible of a very different history, *Centesimus* nevertheless recommends both structural and rights-based limits on the state that are remarkably similar to those achieved in Anglo-American institutions.

There remains the question of how to reconcile the Pope's sense of the state with the ideal of "solidarity" that is so evident in the pages of the encyclical. Is it possible to espouse a liberal, or at least quasi-liberal, view of the state and at the same time speak, as he does, of the "expanding chain of solidarity" (#43)? (This is, of course, a question that has led to fervent debate among liberal theorists themselves: can liberal political institutions accommodate the communitarian ideals of modern citizens?)

One thing this Pope has learned is the inevitability of conflict. For him, conflict in the economic and social sectors is not necessarily an evil or a disordered phenomenon. Indeed, he appears to assume that some states will be religiously pluralistic and will thus have to negotiate religious differences according to juridically recognized rights. It is important to remember that Marxist and socialist states claimed to have as their principal goal the elimination of self-interest and societal conflict by subsuming all activities into the power of the state. For John Paul, the main problem is not the stress and strain of either religious pluralism or economic markets. Rather, it is conflict not "constrained by ethical or juridical considerations"—a "total war" in which force is put above the rule of law (CA #14). The state's principal task, then, is to determine the "juridical framework" of economic and social activities.

In contrast to the classical or medieval conception of the *civitas*, the state in *Centesimus* is not the locus or principal expression of cosmic harmony. It is not empowered to smooth over the rough and tumble of economic and religious difference. Nor is it to sacrifice the shaggy and incomplete dynamisms of economic activity to consolidated state power. John Paul recognizes that once it is submitted to proper limits, the power of the state will be weakened. It is interesting that the reference to the "progressively expanding chain of solidarity" in #43 is set in the context of a discussion of limits upon state power.

In the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), solidarity denotes various kinds of "collaboration" among individuals and states (SR #39). Yet in *Sollicitudo* solidarity also stands in tension with freedom: "In order to be genuine, development must be achieved within the framework of solidarity and freedom, without ever sacrificing either of them under whatever pretext" (SR #33). Here, the Pope distinguishes between the principle of social and affective unity whereby persons or groups collaborate toward common ends, and the principle of freedom. And it is the latter principle that constitutes the reason for political rights.

In *Centesimus* the cultural, familial, economic, and religious activities are ordained to "solidarity" of various sorts, while the state, on the other hand, has the obligation to protect the rights of citizens to engage in such activities. Throughout the encyclical the Pope invariably reserves juridical language for application to the state's dealings with its citizens and reserves for the societal and cultural spheres the language of solidarity. For instance, he writes that:

> According to *Rerum Novarum* and the whole social doctrine of the church, the social nature of man is not completely fulfilled by the state, but is realized in various intermediary groups, beginning with the family and including economic, social, political, and cultural groups which stem from human nature itself and have their own autonomy, always with a view to the common good. This is what I have called the "subjectivity" of society which, together with the subjectivity of the individual, was canceled out by "real socialism" (CA #13).

This is but one piece of evidence of John Paul's clear distinction between the structures of the state and the "subjectivity" of society. Indeed, even though the Pope regards religion as the center of culture, and hence the preeminent locus for solidarity, he nevertheless insists that juridical right to religious liberty is the "primary foundation of

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every authentically free political order" (CA #29).

In *Catholic Social Thought & Liberal Institutions* (1989), Michael Novak has pointed to a chief difference between "solidarist methods" (whether of the left or right) and the institutional procedures of liberal regimes. Whereas solidarist approaches to the common good envisage the public authority "suffused throughout the society from *above*," the liberal approach emphasizes multiple and coordinate perspectives. In this light, the traditional papal doctrine of subsidiarity is amenable to two quite different views of institutions. If we take the older understanding of organic hierarchies, the principle of subsidiarity reemphasizes the notion of those proper analogies that obtain between the various levels of the body politic. Solidarity could be said to suffuse the entire body, but be enacted in analogically different ways. If, however, we take the perspective of liberal institutions, the sectors are more sharply differentiated. Even the powers of the state are to be divided. In *Centesimus Annus*, the organic idea of one power subsisting in another is jettisoned in favor of the idea of externally coordinated powers. Throughout the encyclical there is no hint of Aristotelian organicism, at least not with respect to the state. This allows the Pope to emphasize the nature of solidarity in the social, religious, and cultural spheres.

Centesimus Annus is not a "liberal" account of the destiny of man, but it does reflect the hard-won lessons of liberal political institutions. John Paul's stringent attention to the structural limits of the state, his careful efforts to distinguish its sphere from the social, economic, and religious life, and his persistent endorsement of individual rights against the state must be regarded as a rejection of those liberation theologians like Gustavo Gutierrez who deny the "distinction of planes" (e.g., between politics, law, religion, and culture). *Centesimus*, therefore, not only represents a considerable change from the older "conservative" model of organic hierarchies, it also stands adamantly opposed to the "leftist" reduction of *praxis* to an undifferentiated notion of politics. It would also seem that *Centesimus Annus* settles the much-debated business about a Catholic "third way." On the eightieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Paul VI issued *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971). The encyclical appeared to suggest a third way between the Marxist and liberal models, both of which Pope Paul put under the rubric of "ideology." Concerning liberalism, Paul wrote:

> [I]t asserts itself both in the name of economic efficiency, and for the defense of the individual against the increasingly overwhelming hold of organizations, and as a reaction against the totalitarian tendencies of political powers. . . . But do not Christians who take this path tend to idealize liberalism in their turn, making it a proclamation in favor of freedom? They would like a new model, more adapted to present-day conditions, while easily forgetting that at the very root of philosophical liberalism is an erroneous affirmation of the autonomy of the individual in his activity, his motivation, and the exercise of his liberty.

While *Centesimus* does not disagree on the point about liberalism as an "ideology," the events of 1989 seem to have led John Paul to render a quite different verdict about the historical and institutional issues. Bluntly put, John Paul takes more seriously than did his predecessors the practical need to limit totalitarianism. He takes more seriously the practical, lived experiences of peoples who have suffered under these states.

IV

The prominence of rights language in the post-war encyclicals and pronouncements represents a considerable change from the prewar encyclicals running from Leo XIII to Pius XII. Of course, Pope Leo XIII insisted upon the importance of natural rights, and may fairly be credited with making the idea a more or less permanent fixture in papal social encyclicals. Yet something important did change after the Second World War. Papal and ecclesial documents began for the first time to speak of rights in terms of an ideal of modern constitutionalism. Indeed, both *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965, #1) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963, #27) explicitly refer to rights in the context of constitutional and juridical limits upon the political state.

No doubt there are a number of reasons for this. The Church appropriated the language used not only by international bodies like the United Nations, but also by the Western allies who subdued Hitler and Mussolini. As Maritain wrote in 1951, the "great achievement" of the eighteenth century had been "to bring out in full light the rights of man as also required by the natural law." The wars in Europe brought the Church to see the good sense of this historical judgment. Hence, there was at least one thing about the Enlightenment that the Church could embrace, for both philosophical and practical reasons. The new *Codex Iuris Canonici* (1983) maintains that: "To the Church belongs the right always and everywhere to announce moral principles, including those pertaining to the social order, and to make judgments on any human affairs to the extent that they are required by the fundamental rights of the human person [*quatenus personae humanae iura fundamentalia*] or the salvation of souls" (canon 747/2). These *iura fundamentalia* might include natural rights, or for that matter, particularly important legal and

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constitutional rights. In any case, the Code explicitly refers to the Church's authority to address *iura fundamentalia*, rather than to interpret the *lex naturalis*.

What are these rights? In *Centesimus* the Pope does not clearly distinguish among their different genera and species, but appears rather to use an all-purpose language of natural rights. In some places, he speaks of *iura fundamentalia* (fundamental rights, CA #6), *iura hominis* (rights of man, CA #22), and of *iura . . . ab ea abalienari* (inalienable rights, CA #7). Elsewhere, he refers to one or another right as a *ius naturae* (right of nature, CA #7), or a *ius ad autoniam* (a right to autonomy, CA #30). Of course, a fundamental right need not be the same as a natural right, and all natural rights need not be seen as inalienable ones. The language does not have the same kind of precision that we would expect in an academic treatise on legal and political rights. That problem notwithstanding, it is generally clear what the Pope has in mind: natural rights that are in one or another sense antecedent to political society.

There is no need here to extract a complete list of these rights; they are enumerated in more than one place in the encyclical. Sometimes the Pope refers to the rights enunciated in *Rerum Novarum*, while in other places he refers to rights in the light of the events of 1989. But he also refers to rights affirmed by various international bodies, as well as those mentioned in one or another papal encyclical or conciliar document. Taken together, and edited somewhat for brevity, a short list includes the following:

—"right and duty to seek God, to know him and to live in accordance with that knowledge" (#29, 47);

—"rights to private initiative, to ownership of property, and to freedom in the economic sphere" (#24);

—"right to express one's own personality at the workplace without suffering any affront to one's conscience and personal dignity" (#15);

—"right to private associations" (#7);

—"right to life" (#47);

—"right to live in a united family and in a moral environment conducive to the growth of the child's personality" (#47);

—"right to develop one's intelligence and freedom in seeking and knowing the truth" (#47);

—"right to share in the work which makes wise use of the earth's material resources" (#47).

Again, there is no explicit reference to "natural law." Pope Leo XIII might have been surprised to discover that the encyclical celebrating and recapitulating the hundreth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* had nothing to say about natural law. *Pacem in Terris*, which contains the most extensive papal compilation of natural rights, was careful to claim that the rights are derived from God via the natural law: "And rights as well as duties find their source, their sustenance, and their inviolability in the natural law which grants or enjoins them" (PT #28, and also 4-7). Even the conciliar decree on religious liberty, *Dignitatis Humanae*, retained the traditional language of the eternal and natural laws (DH #3). Whether or not Leo XIII would have approved of *Dignitatis*, he certain would recognize its philosophical vocabulary.

How are we to interpret *Centesimus* in this regard? Does the absence of explicit reference to natural law represent a rhetorical anomaly or oversight, or does it bespeak a substantive position? Having jettisoned the older participationist model of the political state, has the Pope taken the next step, which is to drop the metaphysical language of natural law associated with that model, in favor of natural rights?

An alert reader can find bits and pieces of natural law language in *Centesimus*. In paragraph #29 the Pope refers to "truth, both natural and revealed." But he seems more interested here in showing the conformity of rights to the Helsinki Accords than to any scholastic notion of reason and faith on matters of law. In paragraph #13, he refers to the various intermediary groups as stemming "from human nature," but immediately introduces his own philosophical language of the "subjectivity" of the individual and society. Indeed, where Leo XIII gave a natural law analysis of the right to human association—"all striving against nature is in vain" (RN #17)—Pope John Paul II enunciates the social dimension of "personalism" (CA #38). There can be no question but that the Pope wants to discuss these things in the light of a theocentric anthropology. The truth about man is a central theme to which the issues of rights, markets, and the state are subordinated. Inasmuch as one believes that there is an objective morality based upon the truth about human nature, one could be said to have a natural law position. But this could be claimed for any species of moral objectivism.

While the text of *Centesimus Annus* simply does not provide us with a sure way to answer the question about natural law, there are three things we do know. First, since the pontificate of John XXIII, the popes have been sensitive to the danger that the term "natural law" may be construed to mean the subhuman regularities and predictabilities of physical nature—that is to say, "natural laws" as they are understood by the modern sciences. While Americans are perhaps more liable to recognize the connection between "natural law" and the so-called "higher law," this is not necessarily

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so for Europeans. For us, natural law as a "higher" law is evident in our Declaration of Independence, in the discussion leading to the adoption of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth amendments, in Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail," and in the almost continuous judicial use of the concept (for good or for ill) since the late nineteenth century. Indeed, there is something distinctively American in John Courtney Murray's case for natural law in *We Hold These Truths* (1960). Murray believed that Americans can return to the commonplace of natural law as a source of consensus about basic political and legal values because our regime was founded in the eighteenth century upon that consensus. But, as the Pope points out in *Centesimus*, Europeans "are closely united in a bond of common culture and an age-old history" (#27). The culture of Europe was not founded upon a consensus about the rather abstract doctrine of natural law. In fact, for Europeans, natural law can suggest either an ahistorical order of physics and biology, or the tradition of revolutionary Jacobinism, which is hardly suited to a defense of first things in the political order.

Moreover, it must be remembered that the Vatican was stung by the criticism that *Humanae Vitae* (1968) reduced the moral norms concerning birth control to a kind of biologism. Cardinal Ratzinger, who is more comfortable with the scholastic language of natural law than is Pope John Paul II, has nonetheless taken great pains to explain that natural law pertains to a "rational order" rather than to biological necessities. Hence, we can speculate that the absence of natural law language in *Centesimus* reflects a rhetorical strategy to avoid a reductionist construal of the terms.

In the second place, *Centesimus Annus*, like many other of the Pope's writings, gravitates toward the historical, cultural, and religious intelligibility of human nature. For example, the Pope writes:

> Man is understood in a more complete way when he is situated within the sphere of culture through his language, history, and the position he takes toward the fundamental events of life such as birth, love, work, and death. At the heart of every culture lies the attitude man takes to the greatest mystery: the mystery of God. Different cultures are basically different ways of facing the question of personal existence. When this question is eliminated, the culture and moral life of nations are corrupted (CA #24).

Of course, the culturally and linguistically situated agent is reconcilable with *some* theories of natural law. Yet it remains true that this Pope is more interested in discussing the universal and transcendent characteristics of man through the realms of culture and history, and ultimately theology, than he is in terms of either scholastic or Enlightenment versions of natural law.

Finally, and most importantly, the subject of natural rights is a ready-made and widely accepted way to address the problem of limits upon the political state. A. P. d'Entreves once said that "the real significance of natural law must be sought in its function rather than in the doctrine itself." Although this does not recommend itself as good advice for one who wishes to understand the philosophical issues, it is a shrewd way to cut through the often bewildering verbal protocols about natural law. Functionally speaking, discourse based on natural law of rights has had a readily identifiable purpose, viz., the limitation of state power. This best explains the Pope's use of natural rights language. It fits hand in glove with his interest in liberal political institutions.

On this score, paragraph #29 is important, for it summarizes very clearly the functional purpose of rights. Referring to modern totalitarian regimes, the Pope maintains that: "Man was compelled to submit to a conception of reality imposed on him by coercion and not reached by virtue of his own reason and the exercise of his own freedom. This principle must be overturned and total recognition must be given to the rights of the human conscience, which is bound to the truth, both natural and revealed. The recognition of these rights represents the primary foundation of every authentically free political order."

The Pope gives three reasons for the urgency of the rights-based approach to the political order. First, the older forms of totalitarianism are not completely vanquished. In effect, the Pope recommends that rights be juridically established while the opportunity is at hand. Second, even in developed countries there is what the Pope calls "an excessive promotion of purely utilitarian values." Because of the tendency to enlist the state to resolve social, economic, and political crises on a merely utilitarian basis, it is crucial to erect rights-based limits to governmental power. Third, and perhaps most interesting, the Pope worries about the problem of "religious fundamentalism" denying "to citizens of faiths other than that of the majority the full exercise of their civil and religious rights."

Paragraph #29 is one of the most extraordinary discussions in the entire encyclical. Among the kinds of mischief that rights are supposed to guard against, the Pope underscores those caused by political majorities—either in the name of utility, or in the name of religion. This bespeaks the ideal of the liberal rule of law rather than the ideal of the medieval *civitas*, or for that matter the ideal of solidarity. In addition to the division of govern-

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mental powers, it is necessary to provide for individual rights as checks against what majorities can effect through the government. In #44, where he discusses the rule of law, the Pope expressly says that rights must be understood as inviolate against "even the majority of a social body."

It would be wrong, of course, to insinuate that the convergence between the Pope's discussion of rights and the standard liberal accounts of rights means that he operates from the same philosophical premises. The Pope's sense of urgency for the rights-based limits upon the state is shaped by his reading of historical events. It is not taken from a thin account of the human good, nor from the premise that individual liberty is the highest good—or even the highest political good. In paragraph #29, after all, the Pope insists that protection against utilitarian values is needed in order to "recognize and respect the hierarchy of the true values of human existence." Properly understood, the Pope says that we need rights not to protect ourselves against a "hierarchy of true values," but rather to protect ourselves against a state-sponsored preemption of those values. We can imagine a civil situation in which basic issues of justice and human flourishing are not treated in this language of juridical rights. But that is not the world that *Centesimus Annus* has in mind.

V

The clearest achievement of *Centesimus*, then, is the Pope's reckoning with the problem of the modern state. Whether we view the problem from our own historical experience, or whether we see it from the standpoint of the Pope's view of the events of 1989, it is clear that liberal political and legal institutions are a good (though not perfect) way to limit the power of the state. John Paul is the first modern pope fully to come to terms with this issue. He sees clearly that the older notion of the state as the image of divine authority does not square with modern political realities. Most Catholics have lived in this century under the yoke of despotic political regimes that bear not the slightest resemblance to the classical or medieval conception of the *civitas*.

Although we can only speculate about this, it might be that the Pope is making a bid to return to what he takes to be the original source of European unity—the religious vision of human nature—while at the same time endorsing liberal political structures to protect the recovery of that vision. We should take the Pope seriously when he says that religion is the key to culture. Whereas Pope Leo XIII never gave an inch on his understanding of the political *civitas*, John Paul does not compromise on his vision of a religious principle for cultural unity. The principle of individual rights against political majorities, the division of the organs of state power, and the warning about the welfare state are for this Pope things that need to be in place if the Church is to go about its mission of creating religiously centered cultures. He realizes that, even in Europe, the Catholicizing of the culture is a long-term project. Whatever inherent merits there are to liberal political institutions, they are (perhaps like the *Pax Romana*) instrumentally valuable to the Church.

But there is a gamble in all of this. The Pope has put behind him a philosophical approach that is not only familiar to Catholics, but has much in its favor. *Centesimus Annus* does not reflect the elegant metaphysical scheme of *Rerum Novarum*. Nor does it maintain the scholastic language that shaped the thought of both conservative and progressive pontiffs over the past century. Whether this Pope's approach to issues of human nature, law, and political society can match the level of theoretical integration achieved in the older method and language is yet to be seen.

On this score, the rights-based strategy for limiting the power of the state harbors a number of potential problems that this encyclical does not address. It is one thing to set aside the older natural law account of the state, but it is quite another thing to argue for natural rights without some grounding in a doctrine of natural law. Although the Pope wants to avoid the scholastic and Enlightenment versions of natural law, it must be recalled that the American founders did not. We may ask whether the liberal state can be defended, at least on terms acceptable to Catholics, without some kind of natural law theory. *Centesimus Annus* seems to ground these rights in a personalist-theological view of the human person, but without any of the intermediate analysis traditionally associated with natural law. Among other things, there is the danger that if the ground of these rights resides *only* in revealed theology, that ground will be summarily dismissed, with the result that there remains no intellectually defensible ground between Scripture and anti-perfectionist liberalism (as espoused, e.g., by Rawls, Dworkin, et al.). While this Pope seems more interested in the practical rather than the theoretical issue of rights, these practical considerations will never be sufficient to keep rights properly focused.

Furthermore, it should go without saying that the most important moral teachings of Catholicism cannot be encapsulated in the language of rights. Rights language inevitably tends to overflow from its limited political and legal functions and to infiltrate all levels of moral analysis and every sector of cultural life. It remains uncertain whether the Pope's strong affirmation of the correct hierarchy of values can be effectively interrelated with the rights-based personalism. In Western constitutional

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democracies, this move toward a rights-based personalism has not achieved a congruence between law and a correct hierarchy of values. In fact, secular versions of this approach have brought about the very opposite of what the Pope has in mind.

We can understand why the recently emancipated peoples of Europe are so eager to vindicate the ideal of rights. Immediately after the failed coup d'état of August 1991, the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies adopted a "Declaration of Human Rights and Freedoms." The first article states: "Every person possesses natural, inalienable, and inviolable rights and freedoms." In a similar vein, the former Czech President, Václav Havel, recently said at Lehigh University that he is "in favor of a political system based on the citizen, and recognizing all his fundamental civil and human rights in their universal validity." The state, he said, must be based upon rights rather than "nationality" or "religion." As Americans, we cannot but approve of this aspiration. But we also understand that even a modern, liberal polity involves more than individual rights.

In this respect, the Pope might learn from our historical and institutional experience, in which all-purpose and vague notions of natural rights have sometimes tended to subvert the appreciation of the common good. Given the Pope's strong endorsement of the rule of law, there is the problem of how to litigate, balance, and enforce all of these rights. While *Centesimus* reflects a keen appreciation of institutional limits upon the power of the state, the encyclical is not very illuminating on the institutional problems that attend the expansion of rights claims by individuals. What, for instance, are the judicial and administrative implications of a right to "express one's personality in the workplace"? Whatever meaning such a right might have in Warsaw, it is apt to have a quite different one in Malibu, California.

In any case, the historical career of the Marxist state in Eastern Europe is closed; the history of how these peoples can forge an appropriate political and legal order is still to be written. *Centesimus* takes the gamble of recommending new institutional ways to engage that project—ways concerning which the Church has had relatively little experience. But given its much longer historical experience, and its capacity to resist the degraded ideological baggage that frequently goes under the name of "liberalism," the Church could prove to be a crucial force for the project of limited government. Whoever is pope in 2091 will no doubt take stock of the new lines opened by *Centesimus Annus*. He will be able to evaluate whether, in fact, the cultural and religious mission of the Church thrived under liberal political institutions, and whether the Catholic version of a rights-based personalism was able to distinguish itself from the debased secular versions that seemed triumphant in the closing decades of the twentieth century. FT

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Review Essay

Friendship and Its Discontents

Alan Jacobs

THE NORTON BOOK OF FRIENDSHIP. Edited by EUDORA WELTY and RONALD A. SHARP. *Norton. 622 pp. $25.*

Samuel Johnson believed that Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* made the finest bedside reading, in the morning as well as the evening, of any book he knew (and he knew a lot of them). C. S. Lewis, in *Surprised by Joy*, reflecting upon books that are good to read while eating—which must meet the same standard as bedtime books: the ideal is, in Lewis' words, "a gossipy, formless book that can be opened anywhere"—also chooses Burton, and further recommends Herodotus, Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, and Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, where, as it happens, you may find the great Doctor's endorsement of Burton. I myself have relied over the years on Montaigne's *Essays*, though I am intrigued by Oliver Sacks' choice: some years ago he bought a photocopier so he could have a few pages of the *Oxford English Dictionary* handy for nocturnal perusal. Presumably he feared that lugging even one hefty volume of the OED to bed would put him in danger of being crushed to death if he happened to doze off in mid-definition.

The Norton Book of Friendship presents a new, stimulating, and relatively safe set of opportunities for the bedtime, or mealtime, reader. Eudora Welty (the celebrated Mississippi novelist) and Ronald A. Sharp have collected a galaxy of testimonies to friendship: letters to friends, poems about friends, and stories that explore the tensions and rewards of friendship, along with the classic explorations of the topic by Aristotle, Cicero, Montaigne, and others. The authors represent a range that extends from ancient Chinese poets to modern American diplomats. The result is a lovely book, large in its scope, catholic in its tastes, beautifully bound and printed. The book also raises, though perhaps not intentionally, some fascinating and important questions.

To be sure, one of the great pleasures of reading a book of this kind derives from compiling a list of what has been left out. How, I asked, could Welty and Sharp possibly have neglected James Wright's lovely poem "Arrangements with Earth for Three Dead Friends," or certain passages from the fiction of Austen and Dickens and Tolstoy, or Primo Levi's moving portrait of Alberto, the friend with whom he shared the agonies of Auschwitz? Couldn't they have made room (considering their ample attention to epistolary friendships) for some of the letters between those dear friends and great scholars Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem? Yet even as one tabulates one's own missing favorites, there is no escaping the fact that lists of this kind always are, and must necessarily be, idiosyncratic. No doubt anthologists everywhere are cursed with having to listen to cries of protest like mine from readers convinced that their particular tastes have universal appeal.

This being said, however, I must in all seriousness bemoan one very important omission, which seems to me to open the doors to those perplexing questions I referred to earlier: there is no greater and more moving passage about friendship than Augustine's description, in Book IV of the *Confessions*, of his "very dear" (but unnamed) friend, an acquaintance from childhood, a fellow student and then fellow teacher of rhetoric. "My soul could not be without him," writes Augustine; and then, recalling his friend's sudden illness and death, "My heart was darkened over with sorrow, and whatever I looked at was death. My own country was a torment to me, my own home was a strange unhappiness."

It is hard to believe that so famous and so powerful a testimony to the emotional intensity of which friendships are capable could have been excluded from this anthology by accident or ignorance. Indeed, one is tempted to suspect that the editors left out this passage because it calls into question the very idea of friendship around which the anthology has been put together. As soon as Augustine calls this young man his "dear friend," he takes it back: "But he was not in those early days [of childhood], nor even in this later time, a friend in the true meaning of friendship, because there can be no true friendship unless those who cling to each other are welded together by you [God] in that love which is spread throughout our hearts by the holy spirit which is given to us."

It is, of course, difficult to agree with this. I, a Christian, have what I believe to be real friendships with those who are not, in Augustine's words, welded to me in a love given to us both by the

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same holy spirit. True, these friendships have certain limitations that are sometimes painful to me, but then the same can be said for my friendships with my fellow Christians. Moreover, I have seen (among other places in this anthology) compelling testimony to friendships between people who are not only not Christians, but not believers of any kind. Nevertheless, Augustine's definition raises an important question: at what point does a cordial, or mutually enjoyable or beneficial relationship become a friendship? Joseph Epstein once published a wonderful essay entitled "A Former Good Guy and His Friends." In it Epstein, referring to Plutarch's claim that a person needs no more than seven friends in his or her life, writes:

> I can think of exactly seven friends, very good friends, whose death or disappearance from my life would devastate me. I can think of a second tier of ten or so friends who enrich my life but with whom the same degree of easy intimacy and depth of feeling does not quite exist. I can think of a third tier of twenty or so people whom I am always pleased to see or hear from, in whose company I feel perfectly comfortable, and with whom I believe I share a reciprocal regard.

At this point Epstein asks whether the people in this third tier, who certainly are "more than acquaintances," really should be called "friends." "There ought to be a word," he suggests, "to denote relationships that fall between that of acquaintance and friend." In fact, there may be such a word: C.S. Lewis in *The Four Loves* argues that on a level below genuine friendship—*philia*, which in Greek tradition is truly a form of love, just as much as *eros* (sexual love) or *storge* (familial affection)—lies companionship. Perhaps Epstein's third tier is made up of his companions. Indeed, I wonder if his *second* tier isn't also made up of companions, if we were to be properly strict in limiting the title of friendship to those whom we love.

In any case, Welty and Sharp aren't in the least interested in such restrictions: if Augustine's rigid definition of friendship is at one end of the scale, and Lewis' not much closer to the center, Welty and Sharp stand at the opposite extreme. If Augustine, or Lewis, had been assigned to give this book a title, the cover would likely read *The Norton Book of Companionship, Conviviality, Acquaintanceship, Shared Interests, Mutual Admiration, Cordial Rivalry, and (Every Once in a While) Genuine Friendship*. And indeed, such a title would be more accurate than the one the book now bears. T. S. Eliot and Groucho Marx admired each other's work, and got to meet once or twice—Groucho's letter to his brother Gummo, describing the inadvertently comic dinner at Eliot's house during which Groucho wanted to talk about poetry and TSE about *Duck Soup*, is justly famous—but mutual admiration is not the same as friendship. Scott Fitzgerald's letters to and about Hemingway, which contain, in equal parts, flattery and recrimination, suggest that two men who are talented in the same field are more likely to become rivals than friends. Perhaps the oddest entry of all is the excerpt from George F. Kennan's memoirs in which that long-time student of the Soviet Union got to meet Mikhail Gorbachev. True, Gorbachev greeted Kennan with surprising grace and warmth and the whole episode makes a fine story, but what is it doing in an anthology about friendship? If Catholicity-of-Taste were a character in *Pilgrim's Progress*, like Valiant for Truth, he would occasionally tumble into the Ditch of Incoherence.

It is very likely no accident that the examples most illustrative of this incoherence are modern ones. The selections from ancient Greece, Rome, and China, along with those from the Renaissance and Enlightenment, clearly conform more closely to Lewis' understanding of friendship as a form of love, and to the Aristotelian emphasis on friendship as a virtue, than do most of the modern selections. Now, in the eternal warfare between what the poet W. H. Auden called the Arcadians and the Utopians—those whose memory constructs an ideal past and those whose imagination constructs an ideal future—I myself am prone to take the Arcadian side. But even so, I cannot dismiss the conviction that the more recent selections in this anthology rarely represent anything that deserves to be called friendship, while the older selections mostly do.

"Older," "more recent"—where is the dividing line? Possibly it is to be found in the middle of the eighteenth century, when the neoclassicism of the Enlightenment was beginning to give way to the Romantic, which is to say the modern, sensibility. Two contrasting letters, taken from the anthology, will suffice to illustrate the point. Samuel Johnson had a friend named George Strahan, who feared that he had behaved in such a way as to end his relationship with the great Doctor. Johnson's reply demonstrates in equal measure the great classical virtue of magnanimity and the great Christian virtue of forgiveness.

> You are not to imagine that my friendship is light enough to be blown away by the first cross blast, or that my regard or kindness hangs by so slender a hair, as to be broken off by the unfelt weight of a petty offence. I love you, and hope to love you long. You have hitherto done nothing to diminish my goodwill, and though you had done much more than you have supposed imputed to you my goodwill would not have been diminished.

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> I write thus largely on this suspicion which you have suffered to enter your mind, because in youth we are apt to be too rigorous in our expectations, and to suppose that the duties of life are to be performed with unfailing exactness and regularity, but in our progress through life we are forced to abate much of our demands, and to take friends such as we can find them, not as we would make them.
>
> These concessions every wise man is more ready to make to others as he knows that he shall often want them for himself; and when he remembers how often he fails in the observance or cultivation of his best friends, is willing to suppose that his friends may in their turn neglect him without any intention to offend him.
>
> When therefore it shall happen, as happen it will, that you or I have disappointed the expectation of the other, you are not to suppose that you have lost me or that I intended to lose you; nothing will remain but to repair the fault, and to go on as if it never had been committed.

Johnson wrote this letter on July 14 , 1763. Six years earlier, on December 17, 1756, Jean-Jacques Rousseau had written to a certain Madam d'Epinay, who had attempted to reconcile Rousseau with his former friend Denis Diderot.

> Since we are discussing this subject, I should like to make a declaration to you as to what I require from friendship, and as to what I desire to exhibit in it in my turn.
>
> Blame freely what you find blamable in my rules, but do not expect to find me easily departing from them; for they are drawn from my disposition, which I cannot alter.
>
> In the first place, I wish my friends to be my friends, and not my masters; to advise me without claiming to control me; to enjoy all kinds of rights over my heart, none over my freedom. I consider those persons very singular who, under the name of friends, always claim to interfere in my affairs without telling me anything about theirs. . . . When [my friend] remonstrates with me, whatever tone he adopts, he is within his rights; when, after having listened to him, I follow my own inclination, I am within mine; and I greatly dislike anyone to keep eternally chattering to me about what is over and done with.

Rousseau goes on in this vein for several hundred more words and concludes: "I require from a friend even a great deal more than all I have just told you; even more than he must require from me, and than I should require from him, if he were in my place, and I were in his." This is as close as Jean-Jacques comes to what he promised at the beginning of this brief lecture, namely, his view of *his* responsibilities in friendship.

Though Johnson wrote his letter six years after Rousseau wrote his, it is clear that Johnson's understanding of friendship belongs (in a truly Arcadian formulation) to the world we have lost, Rousseau's to the world we have inherited. For Johnson, friendship must be cultivated with delicate care and rigorous self-discipline before it can bear fruit: youthful pride shuns such discipline, but experienced humility knows that without it there will be no fruit, no sustenance for the spirit. In friendship, as in all else, the incessant demands of the Self must be repudiated so that the emotional and spiritual health of the Person may be achieved. As Johnson wrote in one of his *Idler* essays, "Those who are angry may be reconciled; those who have been injured may receive a recompense; but when the desire of pleasing and willingness to be pleased is silently diminished, the renovation of friendship is hopeless; as, when the vital powers sink into languor, there is no longer any use of the physician."

But Rousseau, to continue Johnson's medical metaphor, is a kind of anorexic: having consistently refused the nourishment of genuine friendship, fearing some violation of the sleek purity of the imperial self, he lies upon his deathbed congratulating himself for having avoided unhealthy eating. Rousseau's self-deception is immense: he believes that someone can have a claim upon his "heart" without infringing upon his "freedom." What can this mean? *Any* form of human attachment compromises one's freedom by bringing another's needs, and often another's suffering, into one's own life; that is the price to be paid for such attachment. Of course, not everyone is willing to pay that price—witness the Buddhist doctrine of nonattachment. But Rousseau will not even admit that a price is to be paid; he insists that he can have the benefits of friendship without having to give anything in return. Such a view of friendship turns friends into nothing more than potentially entertaining shadows passing along the wall of one's personal Platonic cave. A more honest and self-aware man than Rousseau at least would have acknowledged the isolation that the imperial notion of selfhood always brings: heavy hangs the head that wears the crown. Or, as Milton's Satan put it, in a moment of bravado, "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven." Samuel Johnson, on the other hand, would reject all such formulations: he had lived often enough in the hell of friendlessness to be willing to be George Strahan's servant—which is to say, his friend.

The Romantic cult of selfhood, then, is in large part responsible not only for the scarcity in our

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culture of real friendship, considered as a love and as a virtue, but also for our general inability to realize that anything is missing. Companionship, and relations more tentative still, may be confused with friendship only when a truly vibrant model of nonerotic, nonfamilial relations cannot be found. Aristotle wrote that no one would wish to live without friends, even if he or she had every other worldly good, but then Aristotle had not met Rousseau or his innumerable progeny.

Nevertheless, there are times when harsh circumstances force the imperial self off its throne, and demand a reconnection with humanity that makes friendship not only possible but necessary. In *The Norton Book of Friendship* the clearest examples of this derive from war, especially the Second World War: a moving exchange between two German intellectuals living in America, the novelist Thomas Mann and the scholar Erich Kahler, Elie Wiesel's account (from *Night*) of the power of friendship, and the power of music, on a forced march to Buchenwald. The ideological conflicts of the Cold War make an appearance too, for instance in the letters between Albert Camus and Boris Pasternak. For these people, enormous sociopolitical conflicts make demands upon us that friendships help us to tolerate, balance, and assess. The great Polish-Lithuanian poet Czeslaw Milosz once wrote that in times of terror (he was thinking particularly of the Warsaw ghetto during the Second World War) poetry can become "as necessary as bread" because of its power to remind us, in bestial circumstances, of what it means to be human. Friendship clearly can have the same civilizing and reassuring effect.

It should be noted, however, that a particularly dangerous counterfeit of friendship may afflict people living in such times. E. M. Forster writes that, when one lives in an "Age of Belief"—by which he meant passionate and often closed-minded ideological commitment—one may sustain oneself with "personal relationships." Which sounds innocent enough, but in that same essay Forster puts forth the most notorious claim of his long career: "If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I would have the guts to betray my country"—a statement which, forty years later, Sir Anthony Blunt would cite to explain why he had chosen to betray his country instead of his "friends," the Soviet spies Kim Philby and Donald Maclean. Here friendship, or more accurately the hatred of bourgeois beliefs and attitudes which bound together these gifted Cambridge men, and which was as close as they could come to friendship ("the enemy of my enemy is my friend"), serves to justify the profoundest evil.

In light of all this, Augustine's suggestions about the relations between friendship and Christian belief seem to merit some reconsideration. Unfortunately, *The Norton Book of Friendship* doesn't offer much help in this regard. Except for the usual biblical pairings (Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan), a Hasidic tale retold by Eli Wiesel, and a few letters from Dietrich Bonhoeffer to Eberhard Bethge—from which, by the way, one would be virtually unable to tell that either man was a believer—the anthology offers almost no specifically Jewish or Christian pictures of friendship. Could it really be, then, that the West only shows a serious interest in friendship when it emphasizes its classical more than its biblical inheritance?

Gilbert Meilaender, in his 1981 book *Friendship: A Study in Theological Ethics*, does point to a tendency among Christian thinkers to see ethical dangers in the "preferential" nature of friendship. Meilaender quotes Jeremy Taylor, the seventeenth-century Anglican divine: "When friendships were the noblest things in the world, charity was little." In other words, when the ancient Greeks and Romans emphasized the great virtue of friendship, they neglected to care for those who stood outside *philia*'s charmed circle. Samuel Johnson, as was his wont, formulated the potential problem with exemplary clarity (though in a way perhaps inconsistent with his own great capacity for friendship): "All friendship is preferring the interest of a friend, to the neglect, or, perhaps, against the interest of others. . . . Now Christianity recommends universal benevolence, to consider all men as our brethren; which is contrary to the virtue of friendship, as described by the ancient philosophers."

Meilaender rightly questions whether Johnson's statement of the problem is wholly accurate (though not, in my view, as aggressively as he might have). He tends to emphasize the potential areas of conflict between *philia* and *agape*, and thus if he does not share Johnson's conclusion, is nevertheless sympathetic to his concern. But there is another way to consider the issue. A friend who, for instance, requires me to ignore the needs of the poor and the suffering, to repudiate the commandment of my Savior to aid and comfort them, so that I might do his bidding instead, is likely to be no more capable of genuine friendship than Rousseau. Here the Greek understanding of friendship as dependent upon a shared cultivation of the virtuous life seems not to contradict the Christian message but to suggest the proper parameters and the proper role of friendship in the pursuit of holiness. I am reminded in this context of a vivid image from C. S. Lewis: "Lovers are normally face to face, absorbed in each other; friends, side by side, absorbed in some common interest."

Nevertheless, when one tries to think of great Christian friendships, few come to mind, and oddly enough, the first two that pop up involve a man

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and a woman (*The Norton Book*'s friendships are almost all same-sex). We have Heloise and Abelard, late in life, when she was an abbess and he an abbot—though to be sure, a great deal of suspicious scrutiny has been given to that friendship, naturally enough in light of their earlier erotic relationship. The same kind of scrutiny has been given to St. Francis and St. Clare, though for much less reason. Bonhoeffer and Bethge were indeed great Christian friends. Augustine and Alypius were close even before they became Christians almost simultaneously. As a teacher of English literature, I also tend to think of George Herbert and Nicholas Ferrar, William Cowper and John Newton (an asymmetrical friendship, thanks to Cowper's profound mental and spiritual afflictions and Newton's attentiveness to them), Flannery O'Connor and several of her correspondents. C. S. Lewis and Charles Williams are candidates, and there is Lewis' troubled and inconsistent friendship with J. R. R. Tolkien. Tractarianism was, as Lewis says in *The Four Loves*, a movement that began in a series of friendships.

Even as I list these, however, I am aware that when Christians become especially close to one another we tend not to refer to them as friends: rather, we follow the biblical pattern and call them "brothers and sisters in Christ." A true enough naming, but a distinction needs to be made. After all, when Lewis and Tolkien fell out with each other and for all practical purposes ceased to be friends, they did not cease to be brothers in Christ, a point with which both would have been quick to agree. Friendship, as most commentators on the subject have pointed out, is a willed, a chosen thing (otherwise it could not be a virtue). But we do not choose our brothers and sisters in Christ, nor that larger family of all humanity to which we have unalterable obligations. Bonhoeffer and Bethge were brothers in Christ, but they were also friends; each of them had other brothers in Christ who were not friends, and perhaps friends who were not brothers in Christ.

Such distinctions pose questions that cannot be answered, but only listed. How (if at all) do our responsibilities to our Christian friends differ from those we bear towards other brothers and sisters in Christ? If we have unbelieving friends, what happens when our obligations to them conflict with our obligations to our fellow Christians? (As St. Paul says in Galatians 6:10, "Let us work for the good of all, *especially* members of the household of faith" [emphasis added].) How does our understanding such friendships change when we see them in the light of biblical commands to proclaim the Gospel, to defend our faith, to bear witness to the saving power of Christ?

These questions lead to another, in some ways just as important: why is Meilaender's book such a curiosity? Which is to say, why are there so few attempts, by Christians anyway, and for all I know by Jews, to formulate a theology of friendship?

The Norton Book of Friendship came to me first as an entertaining bedtime book, "gossipy and formless" indeed, agreeable and entertaining. But with subsequent readings I have come to think of this book as compelling testimony to a profound cultural poverty. Real friendship, all the authorities agree, has always been rare, but it has often been sought after, and celebrated when found. Among the most celebrated of all friendships is that between Michel de Montaigne and Etienne de la Boetie, which lasted only four years before Boetie's untimely death. So deep was Montaigne's grief that, over a period of decades, he wrote his magnificent *Essays* largely as compensation for the wonderful conversations he had once enjoyed but would never have again. In this friendship (and note the present tense in the first sentence), "our souls mingle and blend with each other so completely that they efface the seam that joined them, and cannot find it again. If you press me to tell why I loved him, I feel that this cannot be expressed, except by answering: Because it was he, because it was I." Few people, in any age and in any culture, have had a friendship like this one; but how many people in our world can comprehend, or even imagine, the experience Montaigne describes?

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Books In Review

Maintaining a Discreet Silence

THE IDEA OF THE UNIVERSITY: A REEXAMINATION. By JAROSLAV PELIKAN. *Yale University Press. 238 pp. $30.*

Reviewed by **James Turner**

THE SPAN of Jaroslav Pelikan's academic career approaches half a century. In these decades he has made himself the modern master of *Dogmengeschichte,* the worthy successor of the great Harnack (an achievement appreciated by David Lotz in the May issue of FIRST THINGS). But if the Germanic comparison suggests musty pedantry, then it utterly misrepresents Pelikan. For the scope and scintillation of his writing—liberal learning in the truest sense—has made him one of the shining ornaments of the contemporary American university. Nor has he shunned the grimier tasks required to keep the engines of modern erudition running. In addition to being Sterling Professor of History at Yale, Pelikan has also, and with notable success, served as dean of that University's Graduate School.

From this eminence, Pelikan now assays the health and prospects of the university—the American version in particular, but seen as a species of *universitas universalis.* The present book originated in an invitation to Pelikan from Yale's president Benno Schmidt to deliver a series of lectures on "The Future of the University" in anticipation of Yale's tricentennial. (Schmidt himself has recently fled Yale's travails, readers may recall, to a career helping to build the McDonald's of profit-making schools.) Pelikan hit on the happy idea of conducting these lectures in a loose dialogue with John Henry Newman's classic, *The Idea of a University*—also delivered originally as lectures, in the 1850s, and published in more or less final form in 1873. Thus, the keenest Victorian assessment of the university ideal serves as a touchstone for Pelikan's own seasoned reflections more than a century later.

And these reflections do have the balance and caution that come with maturity. Newman wrote, in early middle age, with the creative verve of a man trying to build (in Catholic Ireland) a new and better version of the beloved Oxford from which his conversion to Rome had forced him into reluctant exile. Pelikan writes, a decade or two older than Newman was, with the fencing skill of a man warding off attacks on the cherished institution from which he has taken sustenance through a long and productive life. And for the reader who wants a thoughtful summation of the best conventional wisdom about universities in America, there exists no more lucid or convenient handbook than *The Idea of the University.*

I MUST ADMIT at the outset that I wholeheartedly share Pelikan's fondness for the modern university (which has nurtured me, too), his cheerleader's enthusiasm for its enormous achievements, his appreciation of the values that animate it at its best, and his gracefully modulated dismay at the shallowness and misdirection of much of the current criticism of this beleaguered institution. I do not, however, share what seems to me his

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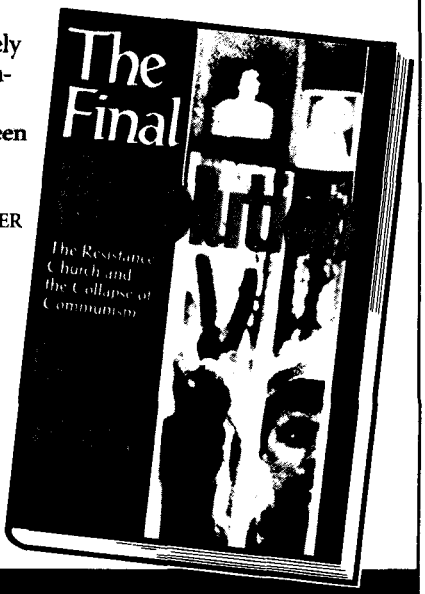

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capacity to avert his gaze from its root-and-branch failures.

To be sure, Pelikan is far from blind to problems besetting modern universities. His book offers a long menu of them. He comments shrewdly and lucidly on such key failures as that of graduate training to prepare future professors for undergraduate teaching, that of scholars to speak to any audience wider than their fellow specialists, that of professional schools and arts-and-sciences faculties to overcome the mutual isolation that divides them one from another and debilitates their individual intellectual enterprises. He takes swipes as well at several of the less central but still egregious scandals of American higher education, such as the stench arising from big-time college athletics and the feebleness of teacher-education. And for a few of these problems that especially engage him—the preparation of schoolteachers is one—he maps out thoughtful and plausible, though not necessarily original, avenues of reform.

But then Pelikan does not strive for originality. Indeed, the eschewing of flash in favor of substance is the great strength of his book—and a quality all the more welcome for being notably absent in best-selling recent critiques of higher education. The most interesting points in *The Idea of the University* are those at which Pelikan latches on to a commonplace and shows how we have failed really to appreciate it. The attention he focuses on the centrality of libraries to the university's mission—and the baleful consequences of their current malnutrition in most budgets—is a good example of this. Another is his recurrent commentary on the international linkages that bind together universities and their scholars. On this subject his allusions bring home more forcefully than most full-length essays the ways in which the increasingly international organization of knowledge will change the basic structure of academic work.

In the end—frustratingly—there are too many good things. One wishes that Pelikan had written more about less, had spelled out the implications of a handful of his really acute insights, had given us a book that is less an owner's manual and more a cogent program for reform.

AND WHAT SORT of "work of self-reformation"—to invoke Pelikan's phrase—would he have universities initiate? As the reader of *The Idea of the University* proceeds through its topical chapters, its author's disposition becomes clearer and clearer. He is a thoughtful and wide-awake Tory: careful to preserve and bolster the university's traditional strengths, anxious to amend its more evidently dangerous weaknesses, cautious not to let new needs go unmet. A reforming conservative: not Newman, but Burke.

Yet, like Burke, Pelikan sometimes averts his eyes from unlovely realities that might put a-tumble the whole harmonious picture. Burke's "unbought grace of life" was in fact pretty dearly bought (ask the peasants), and the great achievements of the modern university have likewise come at considerable cost. We hardly require (I hope) an academic French Revolution, tumbrels rolling through the quads. But we do need to ask more penetrating questions than even the wisest Yale Tory is apt to put.

We need, in the first instance, to ask where the major work of American higher education goes on. The answer is that it is not at Yale or Chicago (Pelikan's principal avatars of the University) or, for that matter, Michigan, where I teach. The vast majority of American students get their degrees from Ripon College, Prairie View A & M, Phillips University, the University of Massachusetts at Boston, and so on. These institutions do not share with Yale and Chicago and Michigan a first-rank research library, a panoply of professional schools, or a continent-hopping faculty. Yet, realistically, they are the heart of the matter; for, when mass higher education became a fact of life, the university took on strange and protean shapes. But these, Pelikan's reader comes to feel, are lesser breeds without the Law. Pelikan nods occasionally in their direction, and not condescendingly. But it is all too clear that when he thinks "university," he thinks Chicago and Yale.

And even in thinking about Chicago and Yale, he pulls up short when nearing the verge of their (and most universities') crippling wrongs. All the overblown carping about political correctness and the search for tenured radicals under every podium—from which *The Idea of the University* brings blessed respite—has served to distract attention from problems in higher education that run much deeper. Some of these Pelikan confronts. But it is almost as if he can not quite bear to look upon the most scarlet sins of the Alma Mater he loves so well and so admirably.

THE WORDS "general education," "core curriculum," even "curriculum" are strikingly absent from the index. "Undergraduate education" leads to some oblique references to these matters. But mostly Pelikan chooses to avoid discussing the structure of undergraduate education and its relation to the aims of liberal learning. This is an odd omission for someone whose interlocutor is Newman. It becomes even odder when one recalls how much time in recent years colleges and universities have devoted to wrangling over core curricula and graduation requirements.

Surely the salient issue in undergraduate education today is not class size, teaching method, relation to professional education, or connection with research, but its very coherence. Lacking consensus on the aims of education, faculties can hardly achieve it on the content. With a few honorable exceptions (Pelikan's alma mater, Chicago, distinguished among them) colleges and universities have let general education slide into confused fragmentation. Students must take

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a bit of this and a little of that; but how it all fits together comprises a great mystery—especially to the students for whom the Age of Faith has returned. The relatively rare efforts to reconstruct some kind of order, among which Harvard's is perhaps the most publicized, have focused on cultivating higher-order skills, such as moral reasoning. This neatly evades the real issue: whether there is to be common *knowledge*. That is, whether our high culture coheres at all.

Similar issues emerge, not surprisingly, in graduate education and in scholarship. Pelikan notes, and laments, the gathering momentum towards hyperspecialization in both, reflected in the scholar's loss of the capacity to speak to a generally educated audience—or even to scholars in related disciplines. But he does not go on to inquire into the university's larger relation to this fragmentation of knowledge. Yet all of these sore spots are portions of a single great wound.

There is no more patent or defining characteristic of modern intellectual life than its fragmentation. What has been lost over the past century or so is the conviction of the unity of knowledge. The belief stemmed ultimately from faith in the unity of creation and the Creator. But it was always embodied more immediately in some intellectual (and academic) tradition, such as Aristotelian scholasticism or the Scottish Enlightenment's melding of common-sense realism, moral philosophy, and social inquiry. As the former perfused medieval universities, so the latter dominated Anglo-American intellectual life (and colleges) through much of the nineteenth century.

The fading of this root conviction, and the sundering of the loosely cohering traditions that made it concrete, involved (to borrow a phrase from Newman) both loss and gain. Both were evident in universities. Anyone worried about politically correct intolerance would reassure himself if he could visit almost any American college circa 1850 and learn what closed-mindedness and limits to dissent really mean. Yet anyone with access to a major library actually can read, in the yellowed pages of Victorian reviews, learned professors discussing the significance of their research in terms accessible to any literate person.

Universities have become (and this is virtually an axiom of *The Idea of the University*) the centers of organized knowledge in the modern world. Can they do anything to restore coherence to intellectual life, to reconnect the severed regions of knowledge, to rebuild a truly common discourse? And can they do this without sacrificing academic freedom, the openness and

JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL CONVERSATION

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the creativity that were won only by dynamiting the old unitary traditions? Alasdair MacIntyre and Richard Rorty would not make happy bunkmates, but both insist that real discourse requires shared intellectual and moral ground. If so, then universities need to learn again how to cultivate it.

There can hardly be a question that goes more directly to the heart of the present condition of the university—nor one that could set off more and bitterer fights within it. And Pelikan steps carefully around it. In doing so, he reflects the nervousness of other leaders of higher education. For scarcely anyone in or around universities wants to touch a fuse to this powder keg: especially when a stick of dynamite labeled "race" or "gender" or "financial crisis" or "accountability" is apt to blow up in the provost's office at any moment.

Pelikan is right in implying, in both the tone of his voice and the tenor of his recommendations, that university reformers should tread carefully, for, with all its defects, the university remains among our most vital and valuable institutions. It still works, however sporadically and creakily. It is a custodian and amender of our intellectual heritage, a needed critical voice, a stairway of social mobility, an engine of material progress, and a teacher by example of the great truth that some things matter more than material progress. All of these lessons Pelikan teaches with conviction, good sense, lucidity, a wealth of ripened experience, and his own compelling personal witness. But the university also needs a thorough rethinking; it needs answers to very big, very hard questions. About this, *The Idea of the University* maintains discreet silence.

Is Modernity Good for the Jews?

DIVIDED PASSIONS: JEWISH INTELLECTUALS AND THE EXPERIENCE OF MODERNITY. By PAUL MENDES-FLOHR. *Wayne State University Press. 449 pp. $39.95.*

Reviewed by **Steven B. Smith**

IN GENESIS (24:10) it is said that Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, descended from Mesopotamia—or as it is called in Hebrew *Aram-Naharaim*, literally, a land of the two rivers. Paul Mendes-Flohr notes that when the great philosopher and theologian Franz Rosenzweig came to this passage he translated it as *Zweistromland* to indicate that the Jewish nation is nurtured and sustained by two streams or a conjunction of several sources. It is the image of the Jews as a people destined to live between "two rivers" or to combine multiple cultures that is the recurrent theme of *Divided Passions.*

Paul Mendes-Flohr is Professor of Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is the author of two earlier studies of Martin Buber and has edited and contributed to several volumes of Jewish social thought and history. *Divided Passions* brings together seventeen essays, all previously published but not all easily accessible, dealing with different aspects of the German-Jewish experience of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Each of these essays is written with grace and authority, combining learning and erudition with compassion and sympathy for his subject. The essays range from some preliminary reflections on the category of the "Jewish intellectual" to particular case studies of Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Gershom Scholem, Ernst Bloch, and Judah Magnes. The work concludes with a "non-philippic" defense of the author's own Zionism as a way of living with divided passions.

It would be possible to quarrel with the author's use of the term "intellectual" to describe such a wide range of thinkers. The term calls to mind more the image of a coffee house *shmoozer* than, say, Ernst Simon's moving recollection of the dying Franz Rosenzweig stricken with paralysis and struggling desperately with a primitive typewriter to complete his translation of the Bible. Be that as it may, it is no exaggeration to say that Mendes-Flohr is the most interesting historian of the German-Jewish intellectual experience writing today.

THE ESSAYS that comprise this volume constitute a lengthy meditation upon the "ambivalent dialogue" that characterized German-Jewish relations from approximately the time of Moses Mendelssohn to the collapse of the Weimar republic. To characterize these relations as "ambivalent" is, of course, already to enter disputed territory: Gershom Scholem has passionately insisted that there was never a German-Jewish dialogue but at most a monologue among German Jews about the price of their admission to civil society.

What the nineteenth century called *die Judenfrage* was in fact a question with two parts. The first required both Germans and Jews to forego their historical animosity and mutual distrust, at least publicly, in order to live peacefully within the new liberal social order; the second required Jews, at least spiritually, to give up their claims to exclusivity and fidelity to an ancient tradition, in order to prove themselves worthy to enter the world of German high culture. Invariably, the acquisition of culture was meant to imply assimilation and the loss of historical identity.

The idea of *Kultur* was identified initially by Kant as the inner disposition that facilitates our receptiveness to morality. Culture was

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thus contrasted to the external, public realm of the arts and sciences as well as the institutions of law and government. The distinction between what came to be called "culture" and "civilization" was the difference between what was inner and hence profound and what was outer and hence superficial. In his *Untimely Meditations* Nietzsche maintained that while civilization could be acquired, culture could not. Although Nietzsche was not an anti-Semite in any crude sense (see *Daybreak*, aphorism #205), his views were later used to suggest that Jews could not even in principle become a part of an authentic German cultural life. The reason that the Weimar republic lacked legitimacy in the eyes of so many educated Germans was that its principles were thought to embody Anglo-French *Zivilisation* rather than a uniquely German sense of *Kultur*.

It was against the backdrop of these debates that Martin Buber proposed his conception of "cultural Zionism" (*Kulturzionismus*). In "Nationalism as a Spiritual Sensibility" Mendes-Flohr shows how Buber's Zionism represented a third way different from both the hard-nosed *Realpolitik* of Herzel and the high-minded anti-Zionism of the Kantian philosopher Hermann Cohen. For Buber, Zionism was invested with nothing short of the mission of healing the rift between culture and civilization. Cultural Zionism was meant to embody more than a renewed appreciation for Hebrew language and literature, but was to be a shared sensibility that would form the basis of a new form of collective life. Zionism was to be more than the restitution of political sovereignty, but was to create the conditions for a new kind of "Hebrew humanism."

BUBER'S ANSWER to the scholarly critics of Judaism is treated in "Martin Buber and the Metaphysicians of Contempt." The title refers to the tendency of certain philosophers to repudiate Judaism as spiritually and culturally alien to the sensibility of Christian Europe. This kind of "metaphysical anti-Semitism"—the phrase is actually Ernst Bloch's—can be traced back in part to Kant's *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, which had treated Judaism as a purely "statutory" religion void of all moral sense. Judaism, Kant declared, was "not a religion at all" but "a collection of mere statutory laws" designed to instill obedience rather than the inner sense required by the moral faith of Jesus. This attitude was only deepened by Hegel's dialectical theology, which saw in Judaism only a stage or "moment" in the progressive spiritual unfolding of mankind. Judaism with its elaborate system of laws and ritual commands represented a primitive form of religious experience and one that has now finally been superseded (*aufgehoben*). It was this condescending attitude that led apostate Jews like Heinrich Heine to declare that Judaism had been a "misfortune" and to regard his baptismal certificate as the "passport" to European culture.

It was precisely this culture of condescension that led Buber to found the first Jewish periodical that was at the same time a genuinely "European review." Boldly called *Der Jude* (The Jew), the journal's mission was to promote a "Jewish renaissance" that would rescue the term "Jew" from one of derision to one denoting ancient pride and a distinctive national identity. This project of Jewish renewal culminated in the Buber-Rosenzweig translation of the Bible, which attempted the probably impossible task of capturing in German prose the unique cadence and poetry of the Hebrew original. The purpose of this project was to demonstrate that the God of creation was the God of the entire world and not simply of the ancient Hebrews. The Jewish Bible was not merely the "Old Testament" that had been surpassed by the new dispensation but was the very ground of the new dispensation without which the latter was unintelligible.

When Rosenzweig died in 1929 at the age of 43, he and Buber had already publicly quarreled over their different conceptions of law and Jewish spirituality. In an open letter to Buber of 1924 entitled "The Builders" (*Die Baulete*) Rosenzweig accused Buber of having failed to free himself from the very Kantianism he had so eloquently criticized. Buber, Rosenzweig maintained, retained the Kantian view of the entire domain of the *Mitzvot*—the ritual precepts and commands of Judaism—as statutory laws lacking any ethical import. In place of command Buber offered a more "personalist" understanding of the Jew's relation to God. Conversation or "dialogue" was always Buber's preferred means of communication with the godhead.

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IN TWO ESSAYS, "Rosenzweig and Kant: Two Views of Ritual and Religion" and "Law and Sacrament: Ritual Observance in Twentieth-Century Jewish Thought," Mendes-Flohr presents Rosenzweig's defense of the commandments (*Gebote*) as the primordial form of Jewish experience. The core of the commandment is not law (*Gesetz*), which would be merely "formal" and lacking in content, but a specific injunction to love God and one's neighbor. Both in "The Builders" and the *Star of Redemption*, written literally in the trenches during World War I, Rosenzweig offered a defense of the *mitzvot* as the commanding voice of God in the world. The performance of a *mitzvah* is not a dead ritual but the means, the sole means, by which one can feel the divine presence. This is not to say that Rosenzweig recommended an orthodox acceptance of all the commandments but rather an "open ended" or pragmatic approach to ritual observance. One should in the end accept only as many of the laws and precepts as seem "personally possible."

The century and a half that separated the publication of Moses Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* in 1783 from the day that Hitler came to power witnessed the most remarkable efflorescence of Jewish thought since the Middle Ages. The attempt to bring together Judaism and German culture provides a striking and overlooked parallel with the attempt to harmonize Torah and Greek philosophy seven centuries earlier. As in the earlier experiment, the attempted synthesis failed. It is the fate of the modern Jew to live between the banks of "two rivers," between the aspiration for the universal and the assertion of separateness. Not even the creation of the state of Israel has been able to bridge the gap between Judaism and secular political emancipation.

"The establishment of the state of Israel," as Leo Strauss has reminded us, "is the most profound modification of the Galut [exile, i.e., the Jewish diaspora] which has occurred, but is not the end of the Galut: in the religious sense, and perhaps not only in the religious sense, the state of Israel is part of the Galut." The establishment of the state of Israel may have allowed Judaism to attain a degree of political normalization, but it has not solved the deeper metaphysical problem. The problem for post-Enlightenment Judaism is to seek a path between the reassertion of an atavistic particularism on the one hand, and the advocacy of a self-liquidating universalism on the other. *Divided Passions* allows us to understand this problem.

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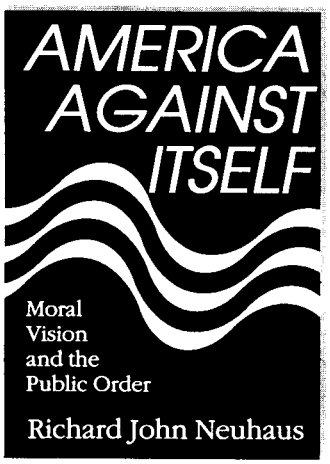

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The New Russian Revolution

RUSSIA TRANSFORMED: BREAKTHROUGH TO HOPE, AUGUST 1991. By JAMES H. BILLINGTON. *Free Press. 202 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by **George Weigel**

ANYONE EAGER for an inside and in-depth exploration of the New Russian Revolution of August 1991 can thank a watchful Providence that James H. Billington, the Librarian of Congress and America's foremost historian of Russian culture, just happened to be in Moscow on library business when Lenin's Communist imperium finally imploded. For three days, Billington wove his way back and forth between the meetings he was scheduled to attend and the revolution he was, in a sense, born to cover. The result is a fascinating combination of fast-paced instant history and thoughtful cultural analysis.

The New Russian Revolution, Billington writes, was "one of those great mutations of history that defy traditional categories of explanation." Which is not to say that those who never grasped the distinctive nature of Soviet totalitarianism haven't tried to parse the events of

GEORGE WEIGEL'S *most recent book*, The Final Revolution: The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism, *has just been published by Oxford University Press.*

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August 1991 according to the tired orthodoxies of political "science." But Billington insists that the revolution only comes into clear focus through a humanistic lens, indeed a moral lens: in the events of August 1991, "Russians unexpectedly found a way to affirm a new politics of hope" to replace the old "politics of fear."

For all that the Bolsheviks perfected (so to speak) the use of terror and coercion, the politics of fear in Russia has a long and unhappy history. In an analysis of the continuities of Russian culture that offers a gentle challenge to, among others, the great Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Billington describes traditional Russian self-consciousness as a "negative nationalism derived from the traditional fears that exposed peoples on the steppe felt toward both external invaders and internal betrayal." The ancient practice of autocracy fed a tradition of fanaticism on the part of the rulers. And this, in turn, generated countercurrents of fanatic resistance: utopian religious dissidents like the apocalyptically oriented "Old Believers" and the (often murderous and anarchistic) revolutionaries of the Russian intelligentsia, from whose ideological womb were eventually born the Bolsheviks.

Could this cyclical pattern, which trapped the Russian people in a vortex of political violence, ever be broken? When the Bolsheviks' time ran out, would the "catharsis . . . be a nationalistic one based on purges, external enemies, and internal scapegoats, or a deeper, moral catharsis within individuals involving the rebirth of conscience and the transcending of violence?"

THAT WAS THE deeper moral-cultural issue settled, for the time being at least, by those three stunning days in August 1991. And the key date, according to Billington, was August 19, the first day of the attempted coup. For it was on that day that what at first seemed to be the overwhelming weight of the coup plotters was countered by

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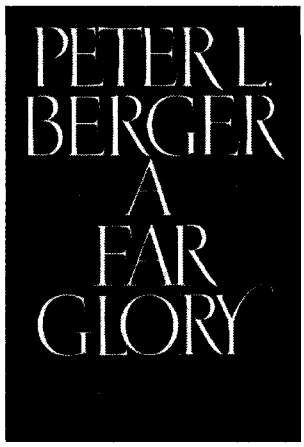

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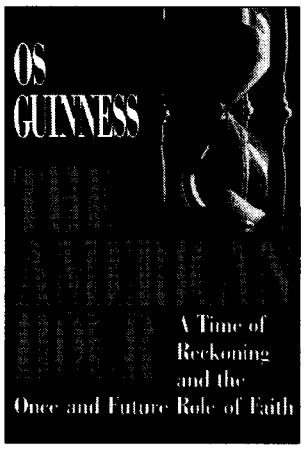

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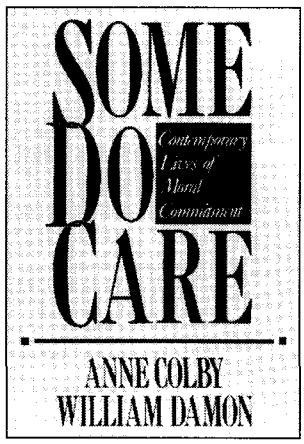

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three elements: "the image of the leader, a circle of supporters, and the dispatch of messengers."

The image was that of Boris Yeltsin proclaiming his defiance of the coup from atop a tank outside the White House, the home of the parliament of the Russian Republic. Here, Billington writes, was the "simple icon everyone needed to engage the emotions in a society where words have often been debased and where words alone have never been enough."

The circle of supporters was the human wall that the democratic resistance formed around the White House. That spontaneous chain of nonviolent physical resistance made it clear that the mere threat of coercion was no longer sufficient to cow the populace. But the human wall did more than protect Yeltsin and those of his people who stood guard within the White House itself. The human wall projected a kind of irresistible moral power: "Like waves rolling outward from a central point, an alternative allegiance seemed to be radiating to the broader society."

Moral power was happily (and necessarily) reinforced by bargaining, argument, and negotiation: thus the "dispatch of messengers" from within Yeltsin's enclave to the army and KGB troops with which the coup plotters planned to crush the democratic resistance. Billington's fine eye for detail is particularly evident here, in his narration of the debates that went on between Yeltsin's emissaries and two key military units: with the leader of a tank battalion from the Red Army's elite Tamansky Division, and with members of the KGB's ruthless "Alpha" anti-terrorist unit, which had been assigned the task of storming the White House. By the end of those discussions, Billington argues, the calculus of coercion had been reversed: "The age of the Russian Rambos was over. The burden of fear had shifted from the populace at large to the KGB."

BILLINGTON IS also helpful in clarifying what Peter Jennings, John Chancellor, and the other great panjandrums of telepunditry found inexplicable in the aftermath of the failed coup: namely, Mikhail Gorbachev's inability to grasp the revolutionary nature of the change that had taken place in his country while the plotters had him under house arrest in the Crimea. In truth, though, there was nothing very puzzling about this. For Gorbachev was never anything other than a reform Communist, "a pure child of [the] party elite," as Billington describes him, the bright young man who made his mark managing the resort area of Stavropol, "where the overweight, geriatric [party] leadership came to take the waters

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at the spa." Prior to his move to Moscow, in other words, Gorbachev was "the Russian equivalent of a chief lifeguard in Palm Springs." Those American corporate and philanthropic executives now queuing up to fund the new "Gorbachev Foundation" might think about this.

Billington is too sophisticated an historian not to understand the truth of Chou En-Lai's rejoinder when the Chinese Communist leader was asked, in the 1960s, about the impact of the French Revolution: "It is too early to tell." But it is not too early, Billington suggests, to identify the three key influences that made it possible for the New Russian Revolution to break the historic and violent cycle of fanaticism and counter-fanaticism that had previously defined the rhythm of Russian political history.

The first influence was the West: particularly Western ideas, and most especially the Western ideal of an open, democratic society. This vision, Billington argues, and not the vision of "a more open, market economy," is what "brought young Russia to the barricades" in August 1991. Gorbachev had offered the market (or a form of the market) without democracy. And that, as well as a return to the politics of mass coercion, was what the resistance rejected when it defied the coup and supported Yeltsin.

Here, Billington gives considerable credit to Ronald Reagan as the Western leader whose ability to articulate the vision of a law-governed democracy was crucial to the transformation of Russian consciences. "The very qualities that annoyed many of President Reagan's critics at home—the simplicity of his message and the use of moralistic language ('evil empire')—found a certain resonance among Russians, who were beginning to cut loose from the sophisticated rationalizations in which Gorbachev was still trying to wrap his reform Communism." Billington also stresses the impact of Western information technology, including radio broadcasts and that grail of the communications revolution, the copying machine. ("The eighth entry to the [Russian] Parliament building acquired a kind of reverential status, for that is where the xerox machine stood. It reproduced the edicts and bulletins that the Russian government was continuously issuing," as a counter to the propaganda spewing forth from the official media controlled by the coup plotters.)

The second key influence on the events of August 1991 was the transformation of politics in the Russian hinterlands. Long a bastion of reactionary Communist orthodoxy, Siberia had undergone dramatic change: by the early 1990s, "Siberia was no longer the place that received exiles from the authoritarian center. It was sending to that center elected radical democrats from a resurgent periphery." Billington's description of the historical demographics of this crucial reversal is a fascinating exploration of the ways in which, over time, the coercive powers of a state can gestate the very antibodies that eventually attack, and destroy, the virus of repression.

Then there was religion—the "depth of Rus," as Billington styles it. Unlike those Western commentators who remained stuck in the analytical tar pits of secularism, Billington was acutely aware of the renaissance of Russian Orthodoxy that was taking place at the popular level while the West focused almost exclusively on the elite processes of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. And thus Billington found it altogether fitting, and perhaps even providential, that the New Russian Revo-

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lution took place in a period of time "framed by the Feasts of the Transfiguration and the Assumption."

Due credit is given to Patriarch Alexei II for his "anathema against fraternal bloodletting," issued at 1:30 a.m. on August 21, just before the anticipated "Alpha" assault on the White House. But Billington leaves open the still-unresolved question of the patriarch's initial reaction to the coup, and concentrates his attention on the crucial roles played by such modern martyr-confessors as Father Aleksandr Men and Father Gleb Yakunin in the recovery and reconstruction of the national conscience. Here, Billington argues, was born the "realization that overcoming totalitarianism meant breaking with the enslaving passion for revenge that fed into the Communist culture of vengeance and scapegoatism." Thus the nonviolence of the democratic resistance was neither an accident nor simply a matter of smart tactics. It was a matter of moral conviction.

Billington closes his memoir by citing Václav Havel: "Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out." And it is, of course, indeed too early to tell whether the New Russian Revolution will turn out well. The achievement of *Russia Transformed* is not in James Billington's capacity to predict the future. It is in his profound understanding, and eloquent expression, of the meaning of the recent past:

"The violent twentieth century ended as it had begun, with guns in August. But unlike the massive imperial artillery barrages that opened the First World War in August 1914, the Cold War ended in August 1991 with all guns silent. They had been swept up into a carnival of hope at the heart of the last of the empires, and covered with flowers on the Feast of the Transfiguration."

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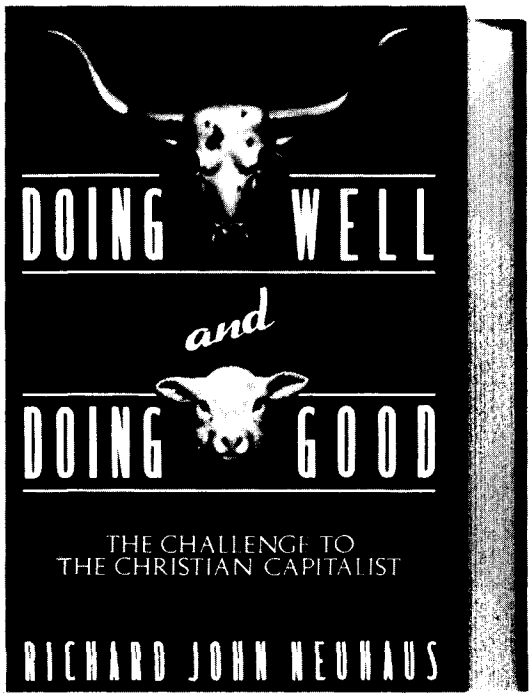

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Scripture for the Gender-Correct

THE WOMEN'S BIBLE COMMENTARY. Edited by CAROL A. NEWSOM and SHARON H. RINGE. *Westminster/John Knox Press. 396 pp. $20.*

Reviewed by **Charlotte Allen**

LIKE MOST CHILDREN of my era who got a religious education, I grew up on Bible stories. The stories of the women in the Bible—rare as pearls of great price among the effusive genealogies of the men—were my favorites. Even their names had a spice-scented poetry—Rachel and Esther, Mary and Martha. There they were in the illustrations to the antiquated children's biblical histories handed down from class to class in my parochial school: exotic, powerful female creatures with their veils and sandals and the bracelets they wore on their upper

CHARLOTTE ALLEN, *a regular contributor to* FIRST THINGS, *is an associate editor at the* Washington City Paper.

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arms and ankles as well as on their wrists. These women were glamorous and sensual and intelligent—and they were holy, too!

As Catholics of the 1950s, we took our Bible stories from the sixteenth-century Douay translation of the Latin Vulgate, whose Old Testament uses Hellenicized names derived from the Septuagint Bible, a Greek translation from the Hebrew made by the rabbis of Alexandria during the first century B.C. The Greek versions of the Hebrew names made them seem even more vivid and strange than their direct-from-the-Hebrew equivalents in the King James Bible used by the Protestants. In our Bible, Abraham's wife was "Sara," a name redolent of the nomad's tent and the cinnamon that the mother of the Hebrews might have used to spice the bread that she baked for her shepherd family. In the Protestant Bible, she was "Sarah," an undoubtedly more accurate transliteration, but one that called to my mind a sturdy American pioneer housewife with a rolling pin rather than a veiled and braceleted Middle Eastern matriarch.

The women of the New Testament were an even more arresting lot to my child's imagination. Mary the sinless Mother of God was, of course, lovely beyond all dreaming, but I was more drawn to the women among whom Christ lived who had shadings of flaws and ordinariness, of quintessentially female weakness: Martha testy in her kitchen, Mary Magdalene the penitent with her foolishly expensive perfume, her hair long enough to dry the feet of Christ, her tears for her many sins. There were other, shadowy women who took care of Christ's daily needs out of their "substance," wrapped the dead Lord in His burial shroud, and were the first witnesses to the Resurrection. Who were they? We know almost nothing about them beyond some of their names. Here they are (from various Gospels in the King James version): "Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward," "Mary the mother of James and Joses," "Salome," "Susanna," and the anonymous "mother of Zebedee's sons." Prosperous, practical, and likely middle-aged, these women who did the washing and the mending for the Apostles get such fleeting mention in the Gospels that they have never become the object of saints' cults. Yet Joanna, Salome, Susanna, and the rest have an honest plainness about them, reminding us that Christ did not come to earth just to save Ph.D.'s and investment bankers.

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to women *on* the Bible—that is, to the predictable exegesis that is *The Women's Bible Commentary*—is like turning from one's mother's garlic-fragrant kitchen to the snack-vending machines in the divinity-school lounge. It is a collection of essays by forty-one female scholars, all more or less at the middle-management level in theology departments across the country (many associate professors, no big names) purporting to explain each book of the Bible from a feminist perspective "in order to share it with the larger community of women who read the Bible," as editors Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe explain in their introduction.

Actually, the *Women's Bible Commentary* is most definitively *not* for the "larger community" of Bible-readers, for they are women and men who happen to believe in what the Bible says. Christians among that group might be upset to find their faith described as "the Jesus movement." They might be further upset to read how Jane Schaberg, professor of religious studies at the University of Detroit Mercy, interprets Christ's injunction against divorce as an open invitation for men to beat their wives: "Interpreted in this rigid fashion," she writes, "this prohibition has . . . condemned women and men to the alternative of an intolerable bondage or a life of isolation and sexual repression." Needless to say, neither Schaberg nor her forty colleagues take seriously such core Christian doctrines, literally recounted in the Gospels, as Christ's divinity, His virginal conception, and His Resurrection (or "resurrection appearances," as Deirdre J. Good, associate professor at General Theological Seminary, calls the first Easter). The feminist exegetes give equally short shrift to pious Judaism; in a commentary on the Book of Genesis, Amherst College religion professor Susan Niditch dismisses the culture of the ancient Hebrews as one "in which powerful women are regarded with suspicion as unnatural and evil" (actually, the women in Genesis seem quite the opposite, inspiring quite a bit of respect from their menfolk).

Nor could the *Women's Bible Commentary* possibly be designed for everyday feminists, most of whom are determinedly secular and actively hostile to religion (try to imagine Susan Faludi turning to the Good Book for inspiration at the end of a long day in the patriarchy-battling trenches). And for all its claim to fashionable multiculturalism ("Women from the dominant culture, class, and ethnic group—especially in the United States—need to be careful not to generalize our experience as that of all women," writes Ringe), the book is laughably parochial, designed strictly for Americans. Its very "Bible" is the American Protestant Bible with its Old Testament of thirty-nine books. The standard Jewish Bible has the same canon but in twenty-four books, and the Old Testaments used by Catholics and the Orthodox—the vast majority of the world's Christians—contain a good many more books than does the Protestant Old Testament, including the stories of Judith, Tobias, and the Maccabees. *The Women's Bible Commentary* relegates the entire Apocrypha, nine books in all, to a mere nine pages.

So, TO WHOM exactly is *The Women's Bible Commentary* addressed? The answer is simple: women like the forty-one who collaborated on this book. That is to say, divinity school professionals and other career academics. No other reader could work her way through the pages and pages of wooden writing (by way of sample, here is Sharyn Dowd, associate professor at the Lexington Theological Seminary, on the Epistle of St. Jude: "Two issues raised in this brief letter give evidence of the transitional period of church history when it was written") or the description given by Susan R. Garrett, assistant professor at Yale Divinity School, of the Book of Revelation as "psychedelic." None but the tenured and the wannabe tenured would approach the Bible as a mere work of literature—much less as a text of divine inspiration—with so little imagination or so little appreciation for the imagination of its authors. This is sobering, for today's student theologians are likely to be tomorrow's women of the cloth. Expect to hear many a sermon from the pulpit over the next decades on such topics as "ambiguous gender imagery," "God as woman," and how St. Luke's Gospel "is an attempt to legitimize male dominance in the Christianity of the author's time."

It is one thing simply to regard the Good Book as a bad book, as *echt*-feminist Germain Greer does in her fits of anti-Christian eloquence. It is another—a hanging offense, in my opinion—to grind the Bible down into propagandistic mush, as these professors, associate professors, and assistant professors do in *The Women's Bible Commentary*.

As a final example, consider how the feminist exegetes treat the brief Book of Ruth, a portrait of a brave and magnificent woman if there ever was one. Because it is so appealing, the story of Ruth is familiar to most people with a passing knowledge of the Bible: Ruth is a young Moabitess who marries a Jewish refugee in her land. When her husband dies young, Ruth chooses not to return to her family but to accompany her widowed mother-in-law, Naomi, back to Bethlehem where Naomi's kin live. It is the time of the barley harvest, and Ruth gleans in the field of Boaz, a rich kinsman of Naomi's late husband. She attracts Boaz's eye, and soon enough, in conversations of remarkable courtesy and formality, he invites her to eat with his reapers and orders them to leave extra grain on the ground so that she can glean a plentiful measure for her mother-in-law. Naomi, seeing that Boaz is a likely prospect for Ruth under the Jewish levirate law that required men to marry their dead brothers' widows, sends

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Ruth in her best dress to lie down at the feet of Boaz on the threshing floor where he has fallen asleep after the harvest. She is to uncover his feet before she lies down. Awakening at midnight, Boaz, struck by the modesty and "kindness" of his young kinswoman, offers to marry her even though he is not her closest male relative and not necessarily bound by the levirate law. He sends her home loaded with grain. The next day, in another scene of noble courtesy, Boaz secures Ruth's rejection by her closer kinsman and publicly declares that he will make her his wife. We learn that Ruth bears Boaz a son who is the grandfather of King David.

Told in an economical four chapters, the story of Ruth is charged with romance and sexuality, but romance and sexuality that are inextricably linked to the making of the family and the fertility of the land. It is a story of what marriage is: the public forging of family to family out of the carnal longings of bride and bridegroom and also out of their regard, respect, and, ultimately, love for one another. For Christians, the story is heightened by the knowledge that Ruth and Boaz are the ancestors of Christ's foster-father, Joseph, by scriptural revelation and of His mother, Mary, by tradition.

Now for some words on Ruth from *Women's Bible Commentary* contributor Amy-Jill Levine, associate professor of religion at Swarthmore college. Just to set us straight, Levine informs us—without any citation to scholarly authority—that the "feet" of Boaz uncovered by Ruth are a euphemism for his "genitals." A real card, that Ruth. Her story (whose theme, by the way, is "the lot of single women in rural Palestine") may seem to have a happy ending, but don't be fooled, girls: The Book of Ruth is actually "a pernicious, exploitative tract," reinforcing the idea that "a woman's happiness and fulfillment require men, that is, a husband and sons." Levine adds: "Ruth's actions offer no means for improving the social system of Bethlehem," and: "It is the reader's task to determine whether this book affirms Ruth or ultimately erases her, whether she serves as a moral exemplar or as a warning against sexually forward Gentile women." Well, sure. I guess I would rather live in a ditch reading the Book of Ruth one more time than be an associate professor of religion at Swarthmore for all the tenure in the world.

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The Limits of Populism

POPULISM AND ELITISM: POLITICS IN THE AGE OF EQUALITY. By JEFFREY BELL. *Regnery Gateway. 202 pp. $21.95.*

Reviewed by **Robert Benne**

JEFFREY BELL has been an aid to both Ronald Reagan and Jack Kemp, a candidate for the Senate, and fellow at a number of different institutes. He is currently president of Lehrman Bell Mueller Cannon, Inc., an economic and political forecasting firm in northern Virginia. This book, clearly based in large part on his own experience, is a curious amalgam of history, political sociology, political philosophy, and practical wisdom about our political life. At first it seems dismissable, built as it appears to be on certain rather simplistic notions about populism and elitism. Toward the end, however, one finds in it some provocative insights.

Bell's thesis is that gauging the inclination toward populism or elitism is the most important factor in understanding modern democratic politics. "Populism," he tells us, "is optimism about people's ability to make decisions about their lives. Elitism is optimism about the decision-making of one or more elites, acting on behalf of other people." Conversely, populism is pessimistic about the elite's ability to make good decisions on behalf of people while elitism is pessimistic about people's ability to make good decisions concerning themselves.

Bell's definition of "elite" is the standard dictionary one: An elite is a group or body treated as socially superior; they are the best or most skilled members of a given social group. Lawyers are an elite group in American society; steelworkers are not, though the president of a steelworkers' union is an elite member of a non-elite group. The people, in contrast, are ordinary, indistinguishable in any public way from others around them in their social groups.

ROBERT BENNE *is Jordan-Trexler Professor of Religion at Roanoke College.*

The elite and the people generate their own opinion streams. The interplay, whether in agreement or opposition, of these two opinion streams is the central issue in political life today. Understanding how these opinion streams are tapped in democratic politics is the key to winning and losing elections or decisions on issues.

POPULISM EMERGED first in the political sphere, Bell argues, with the ascendance of the idea of political equality and its attendant mode of governance, democracy. It then appeared in the economic realm as the economic freedom of the individual to enter the competitive market as a producer or consumer. Later it became present in society as social pluralism. The key notion of populism is that people are enabled to make decisions concerning whom they wish to lead them, when and how they enter the marketplace, and what values they choose to order their lives as well as what standards they, along with other equal citizens, wish to enact to guide their common life.

Bell believes that there is today in most societies an inexorable move toward more populism. Even in those societies in which the elites have resisted the adoption of democracy, markets, and social pluralism, there is a strong stirring among the people for just such arrangements. This does not mean that elites are no longer important or that they are prevented from getting their way. On the contrary, complex societies tend to generate more elites, needed to understand and manage the variegated segments of the social order, and it is certainly possible for elites to use their position and expertise to make decisions on behalf of the people. In most modern societies, then, politics is the struggle over the issue of who is to make decisions for whom. But by and large, Bell argues, people in most countries have gained the ability to decide about more and more facets of their lives. And this is distinctly good, he believes.

Populism, Bell tells us, is founded on Hebrew, Greek (especially Stoic), and Christian notions about the dignity of the individual. These three streams have supported the noble idea that each person is precious and irreplaceable. If that is the case, he reasons, each person is shown respect by being given the freedom to make the decisions that matter most to him or her. This further means that respect for persons is shown by the commitment of the society to persuade rather than to command. Thus populism has grown on Western soil and is now spreading throughout the world.

THE FIRST two-thirds of *Populism and Elitism* is devoted to defining terms, qualifying them, drawing distinctions, and making a historical case for those distinctions. The argument tends to be formal and unnuanced—hard going. But the last third of the book gets more concrete and interesting. One chapter deals with the realignment of the 1930s, when, in Bell's parlance, "valence issues" (serious issues that the vast majority agree are problems but disagree as to how they will be solved) were successfully dealt with by FDR. His success with these matters captured both the popular and elite opinion streams for the Democrats for at least a generation. When a political party captures both streams on a cluster of valence issues, we have democracy's version of a revolution.

The author argues that a further realignment took place in the late 1960s, though this realignment has been based primarily on popular opinion streams and resisted by most elite opinion. This time the realignment was led by the Republicans, particularly by the populist leadership of Ronald Reagan.

The chain of events leading to this realignment was set off by the civil rights movement of the mid-1960s. That movement was success-

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ful because it partially settled an important valence issue—the obvious claims by blacks for basic civil rights. But, the author believes, the movement set in motion a chain of developments increasingly in conflict with the popular opinion stream. As certain specially privileged segments of American society in the sixties became more violent and critical of America's traditional vision of itself, elite opinion abandoned its earlier identification with that vision and tended more and more to view American values as inherently corrupt.

Since the late sixties, then, the Democrats have been dominated by elite opinion streams while the Republicans have won all but one of the presidential elections (prior to 1992) by tapping into the popular opinion stream. Robert Kennedy, Bell speculates, was the last Democrat to have the potential of gathering in representatives of the popular stream for the Democrats. (The book went to press too early for Bell to take this year's campaign into account.)

Still, the question remains, why have the Democrats been able to maintain control over Congress and most state houses and legislatures? Bell thinks that while Democrats have been weak at articulating the general electorate's broad value commitments they have been better at the practical tasks of satisfying the wishes of their local constituents. Further, lower levels of politics are more dependent on elites in law, the media, and technical services. This attracts more elite-oriented candidates and tends to homogenize all candidates.

IN HIS FINAL chapter Bell offers his most interesting reflections. He believes future elections will be fought most intensely on values issues rather than on economic or foreign policy. The elites, who are deeply entrenched in education, journalism, the arts, and the media, are extending radical notions of equality into both economic life and social life. In economics this means equality of results, and in society it means that all opinions are equal. These elite causes move against popular opinion but are gradually affecting even that. They are leading toward a society in which merit is resented and the only intolerance shown is toward those who believe in objective standards of truth, goodness, and beauty. These elite ideas demand a great deal of managerial oversight for their realization and this is to the advantage of the elite. Bell fears that America is moving toward a society like Sweden, where he sees an omnipresent and omnicompetent state managing a society bereft of traditional values.

So he winds up with several poignant paradoxes. Populist ideas of equality are taken over by the elite and driven to their radical and destructive conclusion in the economic and social spheres. Traditional values are gradually undermined by the very populist ideas the author affirms, but they are carried to their extremes by the elite agents he distrusts.

Bell really has no way of sorting through these paradoxes because of serious philosophical deficiencies in his argument. Populism and elitism are exceedingly empty and formal categories. They assess the quality of opinions or decisions by who holds or makes them, rather than by the quality of the opinions or decisions themselves. A related problematic assumption is that the people's opinion is more trustworthy than the elite's, no matter what the substance of that opinion might be. The author gives no serious attention either to the content of human nature in general or to the content of values. Bell seems to think that if we respect persons

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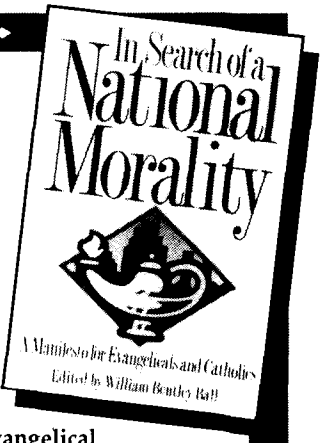

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we must necessarily at the same time consider their opinions and decisions right and good, a very serious non sequitur indeed.

These confusions can only be cleared up by a more developed philosophical or theological anthropology and by more systematic attention to the substance of values. The most profound thinkers about political life have a paradoxical view of human nature that withholds automatic trust in either the people or their leaders. Moreover, they do not equate respect for persons with blanket affirmation of the rightness of choices simply because the persons make the choices. Bell seems entangled in some of the assumptions of the liberalism he abhors.

Because values cannot be affirmed simply by reference to who holds them, Bell would do well to ground his "traditional values" in a particular, substantive vision of life, which in his case is the Judeo-Christian tradition. He should place more of his confidence in either elite or ordinary persons well-formed in that tradition, though even that confidence should be qualified by a healthy doctrine of sin. Bell will not be able to sort out the cultural wars without serious reference to real cultures. The question is not who holds the values, but what values are held.

Portrait of the Artist As a Young Evangelical

PORTOFINO. By FRANK SCHAEFFER. *Macmillan. 256 pp. $18.*

Reviewed by **Jill P. Baumgaertner**

FRANK SCHAEFFER'S latest book, a novel, provides many signs that the author has at last found his genre. Living in the shadow of his father, Francis Schaeffer, ardent Calvinist and self-proclaimed missionary to the fundamentalist intelligentsia, the young Schaeffer grew up in the L'Abri community in Switzerland, which his father founded. This retreat center was the gathering place for evangelical and fundamentalist Christians disenchanted with the alternatives of both liberal Protestantism and the type of traditional fundamentalist practice that denigrated the intellectual contexts of belief. Francis Schaeffer's books and seminars provided the historical and philosophical perspectives lacking in his followers' theologies. Examining Western culture from a Calvinist viewpoint, preaching his wake-up call uniquely attired in *lederhosen*, Schaeffer became something of an evangelical guru. In the meantime his wife Edith began to chisel her identity as helpmeet into a manifesto for Christian women. In books and lectures, she declared that *her* choices should be every woman's. The Schaeffers' son, known for many years as Franky, dabbled in film and art and even, rather unsuccessfully, tried on his father's role as polemicist. With this novel the more mature Frank now takes on a more arduous task.

Unfortunately, because of dramatic similarities with the circumstances of Frank Schaeffer's young life, it is inevitable that *Portofino* will be read primarily as a titillating revelation about the Schaeffer family. Of course, some of the work of every novelist is autobiographical, but the imagination of the artist—and Frank Schaeffer is no exception—is powerful enough to create stories that exist apart from personal experience; and *Portofino* deserves to be read as a novel.

THE STORY, told through the eyes of Calvin Becker, the ten-year-old son and youngest child of fundamentalist reformed missionaries to Switzerland, takes place in Italy during several family vacations. The family is dysfunctional, the father subject to black moods of frustration and despair and to violent displays of temper that the mother blames on his working-class background. The mother prays conspicuous, florid prayers at any provocation, but especially before meals—prayers so long that the Italian hotel manager, watching the soup cool on the platters in front of the family, feels that he should offer them a different dish since they evidently do not care for what has been placed before them. Calvin gazes with envy at the Italians who merely cross themselves "with their eyes open" before they begin their meal.

Schaeffer handles with great deftness the poignancy of a young boy's spiritual struggles in an environment that will not allow him to ask the questions that plague him. Furtively, he visits the local cathedral, lights a candle to Mary, and crosses himself even though he knows that in the eyes of his parents he is committing an unpardonable sin.

Even though Schaeffer clearly has an agenda to expose the hypocrisies and neuroses of evangelical family life, *Portofino* is more than just a vehicle for him to vent his considerable anger. To be sure, he does more than paint a benign portrait of the artist as a young evangelical; instead this is a study of a family caught in a web of sin and denial. The mother's loneliness and alienation from the father lead her to an affair with a co-worker—named, of course, Jonathan Edwards. The father's violence erupts against Calvin in a particularly brutal beating, and against his wife whom he clearly despises for her spiritual pride. But these characters are not completely unsympathetic. Father and son share a day's hike in the country, and the child is able to see flickers and sparks of genuine understanding in his father's responses to him. After Calvin confesses the embarrassment he feels at his mother's long public prayers before meals, his father asks him if he can keep a secret. When Calvin says, "yes," the father, to Calvin's great surprise, responds, "I do, too." Calvin also cares deeply for his mother, in spite of her many weaknesses, and yearns for a better life for her. These human moments of contradiction and ambivalence

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are what make this novel a credible piece of fiction.

The story is filled with moments of humor amidst the pathos. In one particularly striking scene Calvin sits at the table with his family, playing with the salt shaker and ideas of predestination and the foreknowledge of God.

> My experiment was to see if I could do something halfway, then stop or change it so fast that I could get ahead of, or even beat the sovereignty of God. I started to pour out a little salt onto the table but just as more was about to come out, I suddenly stopped and started to shake the rice around in the cellar so God would lose count of the grains of salt. Then I started to put it down but instead yanked it up above my head. And I did it so fast that salt came out all over me. In a way that was good since God is sovereign: He knows your thoughts all the time, so how could I do something He hadn't planned for since the beginning of time. I was glad when the salt came out all over my head because it was a surprise to me and so it might have been a surprise to God too. But then I figured He knew I was going to do this thing with the salt from before I was born. So He was probably still sovereign and Calvin was right and had God figured.

When his father asks him what he is doing, Calvin says, speaking his newly discovered truth, "God made me do it." For such apparent blasphemy his father sends him to his room where he goes to await his punishment. He has the sinking realization that "the whole thing was part of His plan, even the things we did to get out of His plan, like the thing with the salt shaker I did, were really part of His plan so you had to do it, and I couldn't have left the salt alone even if I had wanted to."

What a surprise, then, is his father's mercy when he appears in the boy's room to announce that Calvin's mother and he realize that it is the final night of vacation, and Calvin is probably upset, so they have decided not to spank him this time. Schaeffer writes, "When he left my room I was very glad and sat down and thought about how much I loved my pop. Then I wondered if God had known he would change his mind and not spank me and if this was part of the plan."

There is gentleness here and good humor amidst the dawning awareness of the meaning of redemption, of the beauty and the terror of faith, and of the fragile and dangerous nature of human relationships. Schaeffer has drawn a portrait of a family in trouble and helpless to help themselves or to come before God in true humility because they are so focused on the mote in their brothers' eyes that they have long ignored the log in their own.

THE ARTISTIC PROBLEM for Schaeffer and others like him is that they have precious few literary mentors. Other than Frederick Buechner, Shirley Nelson, and Harold Fickett, where are the novelists from the evangelical/fundamentalist world who have been able to write honestly, credibly, and guilelessly? Of course, clerical hypocrisy is not a new theme in Western literature, nor is the theme of adolescent questioning and rebellion. But even though Schaeffer is exploring material that possesses a familiar generic identity, the scarcity of more specific literary analogues makes his task most difficult.

Despite the lack of a defining tradition in fiction and poetry, fundamentalists do at least understand and use story in a way that may be unique among American Christians. The conversion narrative or testimony—the story of one's path up the well-trodden sawdust trail—has been an integral part of the religious experience since the Puritan conversion narratives. To be able to relate the story of one's conversion to Christ, and to repeat it when called upon, is an important identifying mark of the fundamentalist; it acquires further authority when used as an evangelistic tool. So why, if this narrative structure is a natural part of the evangelical and fundamentalist traditions, aren't there more professional storytellers among the ranks? The answer has something to do with the Calvinist distrust of icon and image, among a people committed to preaching the importance of personal relationship with Jesus—a relationship that is one-on-one with nothing in-between—no graven images, no crucifixes, no statues of saints, no liturgy, and sometimes even no crosses in the churches.

Occasionally, however, an evangelical author will, despite a prohibitive theological upbringing, attempt a collection of short stores or a novel, only to be faced with an irresolvable theological and artistic dilemma. The Roman Catholic and the Anglican grounding in sacrament allows the writer freedom to operate inside the material world, a freedom fundamentalists do not have. Flannery O'Connor once wrote to a professor, "You said something about my stories dipping into life—as if this were commendable but a trifle unusual; from which I get the notion that you may dip largely into your head. This would be in line with the Protestant temper—approaching

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the spiritual directly instead of through matter."

IT IS OBVIOUS that in spite of Schaeffer's upbringing, he is a sacramentalist. Thus one was not surprised to learn that he recently embraced Eastern Orthodoxy. If the world of matter can be used as an entry to God's mysteries—making them accessible, if not completely understood—then the artist is free to write what he sees. Most of the time one senses this freedom in *Portofino*. If the artist is accustomed to regarding matter as a possible vehicle for God's grace, then poetic expression becomes much more natural. On the other hand, if truth is understood as being entirely propositional, then as the author struggles with the integration of faith and art, the line between the didactic and the propagandistic may become tenuously thin.

Occasionally the reader becomes aware of a streak of rebelliousness that belongs to Frank Schaeffer, author, not necessarily the characters he has created. This seems to occur when Schaeffer momentarily forgets he is writing a story and begins, in a more self-conscious manner, to resort to polemics. It is as if every once in a while, he allows himself an indulgent moment of frustration with characters whose theology seems to be no more than a collection of Bible verses, and until he recovers himself artistically, he is tempted to begin an argument with them. At this point the reader becomes aware that the veil between artist and character has been momentarily stripped away and that Schaeffer is indeed writing autobiographically about some of his deepest frustrations.

Schaeffer must learn to trust himself to make it up as he goes along, which he does successfully most of the time. In fact, there are stunning passages, even entire chapters, in *Portofino* that prove without a doubt that Schaeffer is a true novelist. In particular, his descriptions of the Italian beaches, the people in the churches, restaurants, and streets, and the life Calvin observes in the porticoes give this novel a rare luminosity. But more than that, this novel is an act of courage, which is just another way of saying that its author is an artist.

BRIEFLY NOTED

THE FOUNDERS OF THE WESTERN WORLD. A HISTORY OF GREECE AND ROME. By MICHAEL GRANT. *Scribner's. 351 pp. $27.50.*

Michael Grant has written so many books about the Greeks and Romans that his latest reads like a textbook. As he acknowledges in the introduction, the present book is a shortened version of four earlier general books on classical antiquity. The result is too much information, too little interpreted and in too small a space. In Grant's account of the foundations of the Western world, Christianity and Judaism merit a three-page appendix.

—Robert L. Wilken

THE ARAB CHRISTIAN. A HISTORY IN THE MIDDLE EAST. By KENNETH CRAGG. *Westminster/John Knox Press. 336 pp. $29.95.*

Kenneth Cragg, a bishop in the Church of England who has spent most of his life in the Middle East, has written extensively on Islam and the relation of Christianity to Islam. Here he turns to the history and future prospects of Arab-speaking Christians in Muslim lands and in Israel, which is to say of Christianity in its native environment. It is a story that is almost unknown to Westerners, and Cragg, a trustworthy guide, writes with insight and feeling. Though a good part of the book is necessarily historical, his primary interest is in the recent past and the changing fortunes of Christians as a result of the Arab awakening and political developments that have altered the face of the region in the twentieth century (e.g., the founding of the state of Israel). Islam and Judaism, Cragg reminds us, are not the only religious traditions that will shape and be shaped by the future of the region.

—RLW

ABORTION POLITICS: MUTINY IN THE RANKS OF THE RIGHT. By MICHELE MCKEEGAN. *Free Press. 227 pp. $22.95.*

A Planned Parenthood professional argues that pro-choice Republicans will desert their pro-life party and, along the way, she exposes the fact that the Catholic Church and right-wing Protestants are the backbone of the anti-abortion movement. Wouldn't you know it.

THE JUST WAR: FORCE AND POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY. By PAUL RAMSEY. *Rowman & Littlefield. 554 pp. $19.95 paper.*

A welcome reprint of a 1968 classic by the late Methodist theologian Paul Ramsey. And very moderately priced. One may hope that this is a start on the reissuing of other Ramsey books now out of print.

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE REFORMED FAITH. Edited by DONALD K. MCKIM. *Westminster/John Knox Press. 414 pp. $36.95.*

Judicious entries from "Accommodation" to "Zwingli" make this a valuable reference, and not only for Reformed Protestants. It is, more accurately, an encyclopedia of the Christian faith from a Reformed perspective.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER: A SPOKE IN THE WHEEL. By RENATE WIND. *Eerdmans. 182 pp. $14.95.*

A short telling of the story of the heroic Lutheran theologian martyred under the Nazis. A good introduction for parish libraries.

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THE CONCENTRATION CAN. By JEROME LEJEUNE. *Ignatius Press. 216 pp. $12.95 paper.*

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

Presbyterians: Where Have All the People Gone?

"The Venerable" is not a title used among Presbyterians, but it fits few people better than John H. Leith, the highly respected professor of theology at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. Dr. Leith attended the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) this summer in Milwaukee. His insights and impressions command attention.

The "most decisive action" of the Assembly, he says, was the election of John Fife as Moderator. Fife is pastor of a small (156-member) congregation in Tucson, Arizona, and is best known for his social activism, especially for his role in "the sanctuary movement" of some years ago. He was a vigorous opponent of U.S. policy in Nicaragua and El Salvador, and served five years on probation after being convicted of violating U.S. laws in connection with his protest activities. The other candidate for Moderator was W. Frank Harrington, pastor of the 10,000-member Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, a congregation noted for vibrant evangelism and stewardship.

There has for a long time, notes Leith, been a reluctance to elect to leadership positions in the church clergy who are distinguished by a demonstrated capacity to build and serve local churches. He suggests that this is an "anomaly" in a church that is clearly in institutional crisis. In 1966 the Presbyterian Church had 4.2 million members; in 1991 the figure was 2.8 million. And this during a period when the population of the country grew from 196.5 million to 248.8 million. The denomination has 3,356 more ministers than in 1966, but 1,536 fewer congregations. The General Assembly also faces, not surprisingly, a growing deficit. It is variously estimated that by 1995 the shortfall will be between $4.5 and $20 million. "A second anomoly," says Leith, "is the consistency with which the Assembly has elected moderators with a pronounced liberal social agenda" when studies show that the Presbyterian membership is decidedly conservative in politics. "The third anomaly is the celebration of cultural diversity in a denomination that is almost 95 percent white."

A big item at the Assembly in Milwaukee was abortion. Dr. Elizabeth Achtemeier played a strong role in trying to get Presbyterians to affirm that every life is created by God, and is to be cherished and protected from conception onward. That effort was turned back, and the Assembly ended up with language that is somewhat more moderately pro-choice than its earlier position that was understood to support abortion on demand. In the abortion statement, the Assembly made the theologically significant decision to substitute "unique and authoritative" for "ultimate, authoritative source" in describing the Bible. Dr. Achtemeier later declared: "There is a virus eating at the PCUSA, a deadly disease that is making us sick, gradually but surely destroying our life together. The disease is characterized by the attempt to turn the Scriptures into a relativistic document that takes two forms, and both of them are found in the majority report on abortion that was adopted by the General Assembly. . . . First, the Scriptures are viewed no longer as the ultimate authority for our faith and practice but only as a unique authority, one differing from other authorities yet not necessarily superior to them. Second, the Scriptures are said to have no objective meaning in themselves but rather contain only that message which the individual interpreter brings to them."

Another controversy was over whether the Boy Scouts of America should include homosexuals. The Assembly voted down a motion that affirmed the right of the Boy Scouts to set their own membership criteria, but likewise refused to ask

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churches to exclude Boy Scout troops that did not admit homosexuals. When Presbyterians decline to take a position on homosexuality and the right of voluntary associations to govern themselves, the outcome is called a draw. The Milwaukee gathering received reports on ordination, the placement of ministers, and theological education that, says Dr. Leith, would "significantly change the traditional education and calling of pastors." When these reports come up for action at a future Assembly, he expects they will provoke heated debate.

John Leith observes: "The significance of the 1992 Assembly is to be found not so much in its actions as in its changing character. These changes have developed slowly and are more obvious to those who remember assemblies of twenty to thirty years ago. Some changes have to do with Assembly processes that are now much more complicated. Others are reflected in the attendance at the Assembly of advisors, committees, caucuses, governing body staff who outnumber the commissioners (600) three to four times. Other changes have to do with the very nature of the Assembly and, though seldom discussed, will have a significant influence on the effectiveness of the Assembly and on the very life of the denomination."

As mentioned, multiculturalism is high on the agenda of the PCUSA. The stated goal is to have a membership that is 40 percent ethnic minority by the year 2000. How that is to be achieved in a declining church that is now almost 95 percent white was not specified. The largest ethnic minority at present is Korean, although many Korean Presbyterians are not affiliated with the PCUSA. The problem, says Leith, is that "there is no evidence of strong growth in ethnic minority congregations" other than the Korean. So the stratagem is to move minorities into the bureaucracy. Of the 590 people on existing boards, committees, and other entities, 32 percent are Asian, black, Hispanic, or Native American. "The Assembly has given significant power to minority groups," notes Leith, "but they do not as yet have a membership and stewardship base that can sustain this power over time."

Milwaukee devoted time to "1492 and all that," with the focus on the innumerable victims resulting from Columbus' invasion of the putative arcadia that was America. The continuing rapacity of America and its role in the world came in for extended "prophetic" attention. Says Dr. Leith: "No one would have been aware that hundreds of millions of people around the world ardently seek to come to the United States or that the United States is not only the most affluent great society in human history but also the most successful great society in providing for cultural diversity. Of greater importance in a Presbyterian Assembly no one was aware that apart from the Protestant Reformation and Puritanism, the Evangelical awakening in the United States would not have been possible. It is a great pity that no attention was given to the specific role of Presbyterianism and of Reformed theology in founding this nation that among the relative political achievements of the human spirit may be greatest. The confession of guilt when it becomes ideological and politicized and especially when it is blind to grace is pathological and destructive of the common good." From a passion for justice emerge actions that some might deem unjust. For instance, the Assembly decided to take money from health care of retired church workers with less than $5,000 in resources and give it to racial and ethnic colleges, and to take money from world hunger offerings for the programs of Native Americans.

There is a fundamental abandonment, Leith fears, of the integrity of Presbyterian polity. From John Calvin in the sixteenth century up until recently, it was assumed that the church should be governed by the ablest and wisest, by those who have demonstrated their Christian commitment and competence in the care of local churches. No longer. Whether in Assemblies, church offices, or seminary training, a quota mentality prevails in which the chief doctrine is expressed in terms of representation, diversity, and inclusiveness. At the Assembly, for instance, there were 164 youth advisory delegates, and 30 from the seminaries. Their votes are flashed on the screen before the commissioners vote, and frequently there are more advisory delegates speaking on the floor than commissioners. "The voice of the youth delegates is important," says Leith, "but it is worth noting that their increased role in the Assembly comes at a time when youth work and campus ministries are at a low ebb in the church." And, of course, such delegates can vote for their favored causes without having any responsibility for follow-through action in the congregations.

This, says Leith, gets close to the heart of the matter: the growing gap, indeed hostility, between the national church structures and the actual life of congregations. And, at the very heart, is the distance between the gospel and the church's busyness. "The General Assembly was preoccupied not with the ground and sources of the church's life but with derivative issues. A commissioner who has attended many Democratic conventions could have closed his eyes at various times during the Assembly, even during prayer, and imagined that he was at the Virginia State Democratic Convention. The attention of the Assembly was not on the commission of the risen Christ to preach, to teach, and to baptize or on the origin of the church in the hearing of the word of

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God, but on its social agendas and its organizational structures. While social activism took primacy over evangelism, organization and process over the gathering of congregations, there seemed little awareness that apart from vigorous worshipping, believing congregations the church has no influence or power. More significantly, there seemed little awareness that the gospel is what God does, not what human beings do, and that the faith in the God who reigns, who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, who sends forth the Spirit, who can do more than we ask or think, is the source of the church's very life—not process, organization, or social agenda."

The "feminization" of the church was manifest at the Assembly. Nine of the seventeen moderators of committees were women, and almost all the preachers for the assembly were women. Women are now 60 percent of the membership of PCUSA, and in some presbyteries the figure climbs toward 70 percent. The number of men studying for the ministry (885) is falling, the number of women (682) is rising. "While the church rejoices in the presence of women in the official structures of the church," Leith observes, "it now has to face the reality that the percentage of women may be so high because men are walking away from the church and responsibility for its mission." This doleful circumstance was probably not helped by the Moderator's insistence that a lesbian minister from Rochester, New York, who is under judicial church challenge should lead the Assembly in prayer. It reflects a direction that might induce a good many women, too, to walk away.

Some months after the Assembly, PCUSA held a consultation that brought together about 500 people to address the financial crisis of the church. The consultation reportedly cost $300,000. To John Leith it all seems very wrongheaded. "Nothing," he says, "is likely to change the direction of the church until there is a recovery of the biblical, Reformed faith and of the awareness that the church is not committees or task forces or bureaucracy but the community that lives by hearing the Word of God."

Of course the objection can be raised that John Leith, venerable figure though he be, has become an old curmudgeon nostalgic for the days when the church was run by an old boys' network of white males who certified and supported one another by the canons of their patriarchal hegemony, etc. etc. The objection rather misses the point made by Leith, Elizabeth Achtemeier, and a host of others: the PCUSA is, after all, a voluntary association dependent upon the organizational and financial support of people in local congregations. It is losing that support, it is losing the people, it is losing congregations. Radical feminists, political activists, and proponents of sundry other causes may be delighted if they succeed in turning the shell of PCUSA into their ideological playground, but it cannot be a happy prospect for those who care about the integrity of Presbyterianism. Most important, the objection misses the central point made by John Leith: the Presbyterian Church can only be *church* to the extent that it lives from and for the Word of God.

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AN EMBARRASSED DISCLAIMER

In the last twenty-five years, we have written or edited more than thirty books and never has this happened before. Although they may not be obliged legally to do so, publishers routinely submit to the author in advance all the text that is proposed for the dustjacket. Not so with Doubleday and this writer's most recent book, *Doing Well and Doing Good: The Challenge to the Christian Capitalist.*

When the first copy of the book arrived, we read with mounting astonishment, not unmixed with anger, the inside flap of the dustjacket. It seems that Richard John Neuhaus has written a book unrecognizable by this writer. According to the flap, Neuhaus believes that "the spirit is calling for a very new thing: to make money—even lots of it." Neuhaus favors "hustling to make a buck," and his book "unashamedly seeks to bestow a blessing on business." The description makes Rev. Ike or Andrew Carnegie's "Gospel of Wealth" seem understated. The dustjacket is a grave and embarrassing misrepresentation of the argument of *Doing Well and Doing Good.*

How did it happen? The editor who wrote the copy explained that he "did not think it necessary" to check the text with the author. The jacket flap is "advertising space for the publisher," he said, and a certain amount of "hype" is necessary to spark "commercial interest." The editor in question is no longer with Doubleday. It would seem just had his leaving been connected with this incident, but he was going anyway. Apparently little could be done to remedy his mischief. The books were all printed and copies had been sent out to reviewers and to fulfill advance orders. The damage is to readers who may think that they are buying a handbook for becoming rich and righteous. And one confidently awaits hostile reviews that gleefully seize upon the jacket promo to prove that the author is an

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uncritical cheerleader of business as usual. The second printing, which could come soon, will have a dustjacket that accurately describes the book it surrounds. But meanwhile, thousands of copies are out in the bookstores bearing what amounts to false advertising.

As the subtitle indicates, the book is a *challenge* to the Christian capitalist. The argument, which is thoroughly ecumenical, draws on Catholic social teaching, and particularly on the thought of Pope John Paul II in his 1991 encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*. The call is to move toward what the Pope calls the "new capitalism," which is a powerfully reformist agenda that combines the free market with a renewal of culture, politics, and the life of the spirit. Such dramatic reform is required if the poor and marginal are to be included within the free market's "circle of productivity and exchange." *Doing Well and Doing Good* gives major attention to what such change means also for domestic social policies, especially the role of the state in welfare and the future of the urban underclass. The book develops in greater detail the author's earlier writings on "mediating structures," explaining how families, churches, and voluntary associations are the key to addressing social problems that are too often exacerbated by government intervention.

In sum, if you're looking for a manual on how to make big bucks, or for a booster shot to sustain your enthusiasm for laissez-faire capitalism, you would be well advised to steer clear of *Doing Well and Doing Good*. If, on the other hand, you are eager to engage an argument about how the free market—joined to cultural and spiritual renewal—could help bring about a world more promising for all, then we are immodest enough to think that this may be just the book you're looking for.

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Irrational Rationalities

A certain style of social rationalism—usually attached to radical versions of individualism and egalitarianism—has always been unhappy with "arbitrary" distinctions between persons. But even the most determined rationalists have in the past made their uneasy peace with the distinction between adult and minor. They have also recognized that, however "irrational" it may be, there is a special relationship between child and parent that must be respected. In the view of some, such distinctions are holdouts against the doctrine that every person is an autonomous self to be treated as every other autonomous self. These holdouts are now under vigorous attack.

The doctrine of the autonomous and unencumbered self as a rights-bearing individual was among the most striking features of the Supreme Court's *Casey* decision, which reaffirmed the abolition of abortion law in *Roe v. Wade*. In that decision, marriage was construed purely as a contractual relationship between two individuals that could not be permitted to "burden" a woman's choice to have an abortion. In this respect, *Casey* took much farther a view of marriage that had been suggested in earlier Court decisions. To date, however, the federal courts have not entertained claims challenging the adult-minor distinction or the privileged status of the parent-child relationship. That may change.

As a general rule, minors cannot sue or be sued in a court of law. This is viewed as an injustice by "children's rights" advocates such as the National Child Rights Alliance. The alliance was greatly heartened recently when a juvenile court judge in Orlando, Florida, recognized a twelve-year-old boy's right to file suit seeking "termination of the parent-child relationship" so that he could be adopted by the foster parents with whom he has lived for nine months. The implications are indeed amazing. A twelve-year-old exercises the right of an adult in order to legally terminate his being the child of his mother. But, since he is still a child, he needs parents. (It is hard to get around that "irrational" need.) After he has exercised adult rights to be available for adoption, the foster parents then adopt him as a child. If Gregory (the child in the case) is unhappy with his new parents when he is, say, age thirteen, he will be able to invoke his constitutional right to protect his fundamental interests in order to terminate that relationship. Not that his suit would necessarily prevail. A judge (presumably an adult) would have to determine whether Gregory had sufficient reason for being unhappy. In the process, all kinds of curious things have happened to the concepts of minor, adult, child, and parent.

Legal theory that treats the person as an isolated rights-bearing, needs-satisfying individual cannot tolerate the notion of what is "natural"—whether it be the natural distinction between minor and adult or the natural relationship between child and parent. It is an impressive mark of our culture, including the legal culture, that the word "natural" almost always now appears in quotes. The natural—along with notions of biological limits, behavioral habits, and established social custom—is seen as an impediment to the drive for rationality, equality, and control. Thus the North American Man-Boy Love Association claims that existing laws against sexual relations with minors violate the boys' autonomy rights to affectional

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preference. This, too, is a question of children's rights. Thus the exclusion of active homosexuals from the military is condemned as unjust discrimination. Thus commonsensical considerations pertinent to women in military combat are excoriated as irrational bigotry. Thus more and more states are eliminating "marital immunity" laws that prevented spouses from testifying against one another.

These and other developments make sense, indeed they seem to be self-evidently mandated, *if* one subscribes to the philosophical doctrine of the unencumbered, self-constituting self. In a manner that is unique among the democracies, that is the philosophy that is increasingly being entrenched in American law. It meets with learned protest from thinkers such as Mary Ann Glendon (*Rights Talk*), Michael Sandel (*Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*), and a growing number of religious ethicists who stress the importance of community, character, and virtue. But, at this point in the American experiment, the protest seems to be relatively ineffectual in the face of the juggernaut of relentless individualism set upon the atomizing of social life in the name of personal autonomy.

It is near impossible to exaggerate the importance of abortion in these developments. The radical conclusion of *Roe*, that a woman has a constitutional right to get an abortion at any time for any reason, completely overrode the biological fact, the customary perception, and the moral intuition that another life is involved in the abortion decision. In other democracies, legislatures have tried to take that life into consideration, seeking some measure of balance between the desire of the woman for an abortion and what is due the unborn child. Only in America has that deliberation been removed from the political process, as the Court elevates the notion of the autonomous self into constitutional dogma. As Ronald Dworkin approvingly declares, "rights are trump." Behind that maxim is the passionate belief that nothing can be permitted to impinge upon the rights-bearing individual who is the Sovereign Self.

Americans, thinking to flatter themselves, have traditionally claimed that they are pragmatic. That is to say, they are more inclined to the commonsensical adjustment of differences than to the rigid application of rational principle. In this respect the American (more accurately, Anglo-American) tradition is presumably very different from continental social orders that are erected upon grand philosophical schemes hatched by great thinkers. This, it is conventionally said, is also the great difference between the American Revolution of 1776 and the French of 1789. Historically and at present, it may be the case that most Americans are of a pragmatic disposition. It is definitely not true, however, of our elite knowledge class, and the influence of that class increasingly drives our legal culture.

On all the developments mentioned above—and other similar assaults upon the natural, the customary, and the commonsensical—one may take the sanguine view that the irrationality of relentless rationalism can only be pushed so far. At some point, it is said, the inherent limits and imperatives of the human condition will reassert themselves. A rationalistic notion of the unencumbered self, pushed too far, creates a boomerang effect that restores a measure of sobriety. There may be something to that. But before the binge is over, much that is essential to make and keep life human may be destroyed by the rancorous contentiousness of the unbridled assertion of individualistic rights. And many who are not equal in their power to assert rights—the aged, children born and unborn, the severely handicapped, and women abandoned by their spouses—will have been cruelly deprived of the communal protections that prevent society from being reduced to a Hobbesian state of war among strangers. The paradoxical truth that we may have to learn all over again is that the rights of the autonomous individual are of no effect in a society that has dissolved the communal bonds of duty and obligation.

As the whole world now knows, the judge ruled in Gregory's favor, opining that, although a minor, the boy has the same constitutional right to protect his fundamental interests as an adult. The question is not whether his natural mother was so negligent or incompetent that her parental rights should have been terminated, permitting the foster parents to adopt Gregory. Perhaps so, and states have provisions for that (although the family court and foster care system in most states is notoriously jammed and confused). The *novum* here is the boy's standing to sue.

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RELIGION IN FULL BLOOM

As happens from time to time, a book review planned for this journal just doesn't work out. That was the case with Harold Bloom's *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (Simon and Schuster). But it is a book very much in our part of the ballpark, so we don't want to ignore it entirely. This writer reviewed it for another publication and thus has a thought or two about it. A merit of the book is

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that it wants to take seriously the inescapability of religion in understanding American culture. Our society, says Mr. Bloom of Yale and New York University, is "dangerously religion-soaked, even religion-mad." To the extent that a thesis is discernible, it is that *the* American religion is neither Christianity nor Judaism but a kind of Emersonian gnosticism. Americans are gnostics in the sense that they believe that they have a very private, very special, prelapsarian relationship with God—more precisely, they believe that they are God. This gnosticism is only obscured by irrelevant and vestigial language about torah, cross, resurrection, and the like.

No doubt many Americans, especially those of a californicating New Age disposition, do subscribe to a gnosticism along the lines described by Bloom. They are to be found more within than without the several churches. Bloom is especially taken with Joseph Smith as an exemplar of the "genius" of the American religion, although he deplores the ways in which Mormonism has presumably domesticated and thus ruined Smith's spiritual enterprise. He also has many good things to say about E.Y. Mullins (d. 1928) and the "moderate" Baptists who have fallen prey to the awful fundamentalists in the Southern Baptist Convention, against whom Bloom rails at length.

Bloom is considered by many to be the country's leading literary critic in the deconstructive mode. He perches himself, like a garrulous gargoyle at what he takes to be the peak of American spirituality, and offers his ironic interpretations of the religious worlds below in the form of "strong misreadings." Some will no doubt find this wondrously creative, while others, searching for a modicum of intellectual coherence, will dismiss *The American Religion* as an impossible mish-mash of self-indulgent whimsicality.

The book has met with lukewarm to negative reviews, and deservedly so. As with his earlier *The Book of J* (which contends that a woman very much like a late-twentieth-century feminist is the source of the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures), Bloom seems to feel the need to lurch into territories of which he is quite ignorant, assuming that this equips him to be extremely original. Those occupying said territories have not been very welcoming; perhaps because they are defending their turf, but more, one suspects, because their appreciation of Bloom's contributions is limited by their familiarity with the subject under discussion. It may also be that most other fields are not as infinitely tolerant of, even celebrative of, clever idiosyncracy as is literary criticism.

In another respect, Bloom is typical of much writing on American religion and culture. The conventional complaint in academe is that the dominant and "normal" receive too much attention, while the marginal and exotic are neglected. At least in the field of religion, quite the opposite is the case. It seems that there are ten books published on the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Amish, and New Age cults for every one on oldline Protestantism, evangelical Protestantism, or Catholicism—the communities with which 80 percent or more of Americans identify in one way or another. Like Harold Bloom, many scholars seem to find the reality of American religion not very "interesting." Perhaps they do not find America very interesting. That is why, one surmises, they are forever inventing *the* American religion and *the* America out of their own fertile imaginations. After all, what are intellectuals for, if not to explain that things are not what lesser mortals know them to be?

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GIVING PROPHECY A REST

Among Catholics, no less than liberal Protestants, the prophetic mode has been de rigueur for decades. Margaret Steinfels, editor of *Commonweal*, issues a convincing call to think whether it might not be past time to give it a rest. Put differently, she suggests that "the right way for many of us to be prophetic in the context of a democratic society is to be more intelligently, more skillfully, more devotedly political." Mrs. Steinfels was addressing the right audience, the joint assembly of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men. Both organizations have long been dominated by what is fast becoming a gerontocracy of nostalgia for the revolution that did not happen after the Second Vatican Council. In place of the revolution came the ravages of disillusion and dissolution, leaving a remnant of men and women religious gathered in conferences of consolation to recall the "prophetic" excitements of yesteryear.

Here is Steinfels: "The prophet presents himself or herself as the one who speaks for God. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the prophet was a necessary and corrective exception, not the norm. The emotional attraction of the prophet is always considerable; and when there are so many of them as there have been in the American Catholic Church and when their critiques have merit, as they sometimes have, then critical engagement with the system itself, the political, reformist

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impulse, say, can look a pale and halfhearted sort of thing.

"And yet it is the political and reformist impulse, rather than the prophetic one that, I believe, we need now. And its purpose is building up those institutions and associations and ways of life that will create and maintain the social infrastructure that so many individuals and so many communities are sorely lacking. Letting things fall apart, as we can see everywhere, is not an effective tool of social change."

The self-designated "progressive party" in American Catholicism has almost obsessively insisted that the Church is the "People of God." Steinfels suggests that it may be time to attend to *the people* who are the People of God. The ties that loyal, middle-class, educated Catholics have to the Church should not be taken for granted. A preferential option for the poor cannot mean indifference to the nonpoor. Steinfels again: "At times, I wonder if there aren't some in the church who would like these Catholics to leave the church. In some ways it is easier to deal with the poor and uneducated. There is too little effort either to engage the haves in the church as adult, knowledgeable, skilled, and faithful Catholics or to support and encourge their work as Christians in their workplaces, neighborhoods, political activities. Catholics need to develop and sustain a sense of responsibility for living the life of a Christian in this church and in this world. . . . "

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BE KIND TO THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The Central Committee (why does that name seem so dated?) of the World Council of Churches has met once more in Geneva. Major attention was given to racism, and participants in the plenary session had their consciousness raised by listening to a tape of an address to the WCC's 1968 assembly by that noted novelist and theologian, the late James Baldwin. *Aggiornamento* in the WCC means calling the churches to catch up with the sixties. Then Eugene Turner of the Presbyterian Church (USA) explained, according to this press release, that "a major source of racism is fear based on prejudice, which is never factual." Never is a really big word, but the WCC specializes in rhetoric that is bold, as in "prophetic."

That was followed by Hirin Kaa, a Maori from Aotearoa/New Zealand, who said that in his country the church had turned the "institutions of New Zealand into shrines of racism." "The first missionaries arrived in Aotearoa 170 years ago, and converted my ancestors to Chrsitianity. And at the same time they told the Maori to reject much of their culture." They told them to get rid of those lovely idols, no doubt. Missionaries of that benighted era assumed that conversion should be accompanied by change. And look where it all ends up, tearing Hirin Kaa out of his authentically indigenous world and forcing him onto an airplane to go and berate guilt-ridden Christians in Geneva. It is enough to make one rethink the entire missionary endeavor.

The big item of business was the election of a general secretary to succeed Emilio Castro. The post went to Konrad Raiser, a German Lutheran and former WCC official. Raiser has been a major player in the WCC program called "Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation" (JPIC), which espouses an eco-liberationist theology aimed at ending the oppression of the world's poor by the rich nations. Mac Charles Jones of the National Baptist Convention of America complained that the two finalists for the position of general secretary were white Europeans. "What does it say about our deliberateness to deal with racism?" he asked. Raiser himself spoke to the question of Christian unity, noting that ecumenical dialogues are too often dominated by church leaders and theologians and should include people "whose basic roots are in the rich background of local experience." In theological dialogues it seems that theologians tend to get bogged down in theology. He also encouraged the Orthodox members to recognize that the WCC is "their fellowship" and not an exclusively Protestant club.

With evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics in mind, he urged that the WCC must "open up, maintain, deepen relationships with those churches who at present stand outside the WCC membership." Evangelicals, who are the growing edge of world Protestantism, have historically shown a distinct coolness to the WCC, and that is not likely to change as the organization looks ever more like a vestigial institution of an ecumenical enterprise determined to self-destruct. As for Catholics, retiring general secretary Castro left with a blast against recent statements from the Holy See that suggest that there are many outstanding issues in the way of greater rapprochement between Rome and the WCC. Castro complained that relations with Rome "have been put back to square one."

As we have said many times, the WCC—however diminished its stature, influence, and resources—could still be important to the future of world Christianity. But the evidence issuing from Geneva is not encouraging. World history and the vibrant

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centers of world Christianity have moved on, leaving the WCC to drift in the fetid backwaters of the politicized religion produced by eviscerated faith and discredited ideology. Called to the challenge of the third millennium, the WCC gives every appearance of being fixated on the past, as it convenes in solemn assembly to mumble its apologies to the ghosts of Jimmy Baldwin and Maori tribesmen for having been Christian. One is embarrassed for these dispirited leaders of dispirited flocks. Perhaps the kindest thing is to pretend not to notice.

FT

The Center, *C'est Moi*

We have more than once resolved never to mention in public Fr. Richard McBrien, former head of theology at Notre Dame. When, for instance, he wrote in his column a while back that "the Pope and Cardinal Ratzinger are trying to hijack the church of John XXIII," we did not mention it. But occasionally he provides amusement beyond resistance. In *America*, a Jesuit publication, Fr. McBrien has a longish disquisition, "Conflict in the Church: Redefining the Center." It seems that he came across a statement in which the Pope discussed confrontation between "two wings" in the Church. On the right the Pope placed the schismatic (later excommunicated) Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, and on the left he put those progressives who, in his view, are trying to undo the Second Vatican Council.

McBrien writes: "The Pope mentioned no names to represent the left. But if Archbishop Lefebvre and his followers constitute the right wing or conservative side of the church, does it not follow that the center belongs to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Opus Dei, the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, *Crisis* and *Communio* magazines, and most of the Bishops appointed by the Pope over the past decade? And if they are in the center, that must mean that Milwaukee's Archbishop Rembert Weakland, the Catholic Theological Society of America, the drafters and supporters of the U. S. Catholic bishop's pastoral letters on peace and the economy, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and *Commonweal* and *America* magazines are left-wing and, therefore, out of the doctrinal mainstream."

While Fr. McBrien acknowledges that Matthew Fox and a few notably hysterical feminist theologians may constitute something like a left, he is sure that the center-left of which he is *primus inter pares* is the center of Catholicism today. "Our liturgists and religious educators, our justice and peace officers, our campus ministers, our Catholic university and college administrators, our social service personnel, our theologians, our spiritual writers and directors, and many of our sisters, priests, and bishops do not constitute a 'party' in the church. They are products and supporters of the Second Vatican Council—but of the council as shaped and fashioned by its working majority, not by its defeated minority."

Be it noted that John Paul II, unlike Fr. McBrien, was a major participant in the Vatican Council. He voted for its conclusions, and, as bishop and as pope, has vigorously advanced its teachings over the last quarter-century. Never mind all that. McBrien knows what John Paul, Ratzinger, and their ilk are really up to. "They are not the center of the church. They stand instead with the council's defeated minority—on the right. Their effort to redefine and usurp the center must be rejected." He does generously add: "To be sure, they have a right to their own point of view, and no one should have any desire to hound them from the church." So it seems that the Pope will be permitted to stay, but Richard McBrien has put him on notice.

And now we revert to our resolve not to mention Fr. McBrien again, although reserving the right to break it when he is more egregiously riotous than usual. Incidentally, we are on friendly terms with the fellows who edit *America*, and a sense of humor in editors is a very good thing. But we wonder if, in publishing Fr. McBrien, they are not running the risk of overestimating the ability of their readers to recognize when they are being put on.

FT

Rules and Royalty

"Its mystery is its life," Walter Bagehot wrote about the British monarchy in the nineteenth century. "We must not let in daylight upon the magic." Then kings could, without publicity or censure, keep mistresses and father bastards, for it was understood that there were different rules for those at the very top. Not so today, as witness the seemingly inexhaustible sensationalism surrounding the Prince and Princess of Wales and other royals. Observers say that the problem stems from the fact that, during World War II under George VI, the royal family began to market itself as Britain's ultimate happy family, embodying stolid, upper-middle-class, and very British values. "It is very difficult," notes a London journalist, "to be mythical and bourgeois at the same time." According to this view, the monarchy went into show business and turned out not to be very good at it.

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There are perhaps other dynamics at work, such as the democratization of values and the insatiable appetite of the sensational media (which is to say, increasingly, all the media) for stories that obliterate the distinction between public and private. The democratization of values is by no means all bad. There is much to be said for the demand that people live by the standards that they profess. On the other hand, there is wisdom in the old saw that hypocrisy is the tribute that vice pays to virtue. That wisdom takes into account the circumstances of a fallen creation in which there are inescapable gaps between profession and performance. A case can be made for preserving social spheres of exemption from moral scrutiny. That was Bagehot's point, but it would likely be futile for the British royal house to try to put his counsel into effect today. It would be futile not because a convincing argument has been made against spheres of exemption but because the hungry beast called The News would not tolerate it. Whether or not this means the end of monarchy is a question that a growing number of our British cousins will probably be debating for some time.

Closely related are our own debates about "the character issue" in electoral politics. There is an out, however, for those who have reason to fear moral scrutiny of their own lives. The doctrine that people should live up to the standards that they profess is neatly sidestepped by those who profess no standards. The royal exemption urged by Bagehot is today enjoyed by those in the media and artistic worlds who declare themselves liberated from the standards by which they relentlessly judge others. This is not hyprocisy, they insist with some justice, because they are not imposing these standards on others. They are simply exposing the failures of others who make themselves fair game by professing such standards. A public figure who makes an issue of supporting "traditional values" is vulnerable, while his opponent is embraced within the magic circle of exemption. In religion, for example, a hypothetical Episcopalian bishop named Sponge, who has soaked up all the politically correct attitudes toward traditional values, would enjoy a remarkable immunity.

Perhaps it is only fair. Profess nothing and you are incapable of the awful sin of hypocrisy. Of course those in the exempt category do have their standards. One may be condemned for smoking cigarettes, failing to use recycled paper, or suggesting that there may be a connection between the incidence of AIDS and doing rude things with parts of the body not intended for such activity. But he is off the hook when it comes to misbehavior that has been on the sin list for a somewhat longer period of time. And if he claims to be an artist, he may even get away with committing the politically corrected cardinal sins, since it is thought to be the chief; maybe the only, mark of the artist that he be outrageous.

At this point it may be objected that there is the case of Woody Allen. There is no denying that he was unmercifully dumped upon for what appeared to be, in everything but legal fact, incest. The fact that his exemption was suspended may witness to the enduring power of the incest taboo. But the oddity of the fracas was that many of those who criticized him most severely lacked a moral vocabulary for their criticism. He had a very few defenders in the exempt sphere who pointed out that Allen was simply acting on the notions of sexual liberation that his critics also espoused. Or maybe the problem was that Allen—with his decades of public and "existential" anguishing over the psychoanalytically compounded quagmires of life—was viewed as a spiritual leader. He proposed a way, however convoluted, to integrity, authenticity, maybe even happiness (or at least coping "honestly" with the discontents of life). That his own life turned out to be such a shambles for himself and others was sensed as a betrayal. In short, he made the mistake of professing a standard.

The cultural aristocracy of the morally exempt are accused of hypocrisy for criticizing others for what they do themselves. But that is to miss the point quite entirely. Nihilists are not capable of hypocrisy. And they are nihilists, except for the commandments about recycling, the treatment of whales, etc. etc. They are moralistically stringent about being ever so sensitive toward approved victims, and ever so contemptuous of those who still live by the uncorrected canon of virtues and vices. So it turns out that we are witnessing not the democratization of values but the establishment of a royalty that, at this point, may be facing a longer run than is the British monarchy.

FT

AMERICAN WEIMAR

Andrew Sullivan is very bright, very talented, very out of the closet about his homosexuality, and was last year appointed editor of *The New Republic*. In his first months as editor, he has given that influential magazine a distinctly lavender hue, producing intimations of Weimar on the Potomac. In a recent piece, he offers reflections on what is happening to the Republican Party. What came to him as he was "slumped in front of the TV with a friend of mine" is that Republicans are no longer conservative at all, but have become a "cranky opposition to the ruling cultural ethos of the day."

It is, he suggests, simply silly to get excited about single parents, divorce, premarital sex, and

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homosexuality. "All are now indelible features of our social landscape. If Burke were alive, he might describe their emergence as a function of an organic society in which conservatives should properly feel at home." The Pats, Buchanan and Robertson, have by their extremism "offered gay America a unique chance to reach into the mainstream." Sullivan is critical of fellow gays who claim to feel threatened by the fascist right. (*QW*, a gay magazine in New York, put Buchanan on the cover with the headline: "The Next Reich.") Nonsense, says Sullivan. It is time for gays to abandon their cherished paranoia. "This inability to give up the subcultural identity," he writes, "is partly, of course, because there is no longer any sustaining broader culture to take its place. There is, these days, only subculture."

In the gay world of recent years, reports Sullivan, the big thing is called Ecstasy. It is a "designer drug" that "seems pretty harmless," and "it's cheap and fun." Those who have been around longer than Sullivan tell him that "drug use now is unprecedented, outstripping even the craziness of the 1970s." He thinks this may be "the latest wrinkle in plague psychology." AIDS and paranoia about a conservative ascendancy have made the subculture a very nervous place. "As an antidote to anxiety, the drug has finally found its perfect market. Ecstasy seems to be able to provide instant intimacy: intimacy without fear, either of disease or commitment." It is "a happy drug that is a cure for unbanishable sadness, an ear-muffler for the white noise of death."

There is a deep ambivalence in Mr. Sullivan's reflections, as there has been in his earlier writings on homosexuality and the culture of death. On the one hand, there is a note of bravado. Homosexuality is part of "the ruling cultural ethos of the day." The gay world is no more subcultural than anything else. "There is, these days, only subculture." At the same time, there must be something like a mainstream if it is the case that "gay America [has] a unique chance to reach into the mainstream."

There is undoubted truth in Sullivan's observation that the idea of a common culture has been severely weakened. "The networks," he writes, "once the bastion of authoritative mutual communication, are out-Foxed. Even *The New Yorker* must find its subcultural niche." (The reference is to the new editor of that magazine, who presumably intends to turn it in yet trendier directions.) There is no American way of life, only alternative lifestyles; no unified moral discourse, only the assertion of preferences. Sullivan invites gays and others to celebrate their liberation, but then comes the sadness. The liberation turns into disillusionment as people reach for Ecstasy to provide "instant intimacy," "intimacy without fear, either of disease or commitment." Muffle the white noise of death; lie back and enjoy it. As for American culture, only the "cranky opposition" thinks that something can or should be done. Those who understand the ruling ethos of the day know that the jig is up. It would not be so remarkable an argument, nor so depressing, were it not advanced by the editor of *The New Republic*.

FT

While We're At It

■ The ecumenical movement is "in dire straits," Larry L. Rasmussen of Union Seminary in New York told a recent consultation titled "New World Order." The consultation was jointly sponsored by something called the Theology in Global Context Association and the New World Order Project of the National Council of Churches. Professor Milan Opocensky of Prague was there to explain that the revolution of 1989 marked "the end of one particular model of socialism but not the end of the socialist ideal." General Secretary Gabriel Habib of the Middle East Council of Churches highlighted the imperialist perfidy of the U.S. in the Gulf War, which was aimed at "dominating" the region. Marc Ellis, a Jewish teacher at the school of theology run by the liberationist Maryknoll Fathers in Ossining, New York, urged that "Christians in the ecumenical dialogue will have to move beyond the view of Israel as innocent and redemptive." Allan Boesak of South Africa prophetically denounced racism, while Professor Rasmussen's contribution was to underscore the importance of bringing together "concerns for justice and for ecology." Apparently the straits of institutionalized ecumenism are not so dire as to have provoked a reconsideration of business as usual in the tired Old Church Order of the National Council. It is a pity when people not yet old refuse to think anew or engage ideas other than their own, resigning themselves to huddle together, poking through the ashes of radicalisms past. Somewhere in there, they tell themselves, there must be a phoenix.

■ Some readers may not believe it, but we really do not comment on every fatuity championed by the likes of the American Civil Liberties Union. There simply is not space. Here, for instance, is an item we never got around to. Local judges in Milwaukee have abandoned the long-standing practice of not evicting tenants from their homes during Christmas week. Landlords have always protested the practice, and now they have the support of the ACLU. "The moratorium serves no legal purpose and has the effect of promoting the religious celebration of Christmas," Gretchen Miller of the ACLU told the

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courts. "No similar rules prevent eviction of Muslim tenants during the month of Ramadan or the eviction of Jewish tenants during Passover, Rosh Hashanah, or other commonly celebrated religious holidays." Never mind that less than one-quarter of one percent of the population of Milwaukee is Muslim, and a Jew has not been evicted within living memory. Never mind that the courts are quite prepared to extend the practice to Muslims and Jews as the occasion arises. In a democracy, as defined by the ACLU, social reality must not be permitted to impinge upon the administration of the law. "I would like to continue [the Christmas moratorium]," said Judge Patrick J. Sheedy, "but if they are to bring an action against us, we would have no defense." The separation of church and state means the separation of the law from common decency. The ACLU has the satisfaction of having vindicated the great constitutional principle that poor people should be put out on the street on Christmas Day.

■ Some readers will remember John Frohnmayer, former director of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), he who expressed approval of government grants displaying, inter alia, the crucifix in a vat of urine and bull whips inserted into unmentionable parts of the male anatomy. Writing in the *Christian Century*, he explains the mission he had in mind. "If an artist seeks, either gently or confrontationally, to pique our social conscience, how different is that from the example Christ set?" How different indeed.

■ "It's not up to the Amsterdam tourist office to make moral judgments," said spokesman Herman ter Balkt. Earlier this year the parliament scrapped the statute that outlawed pimping and organized prostitution. Amsterdam, like other major European cities, has long had a tolerated red light district, but now prostitution will be officially promoted as a major tourist attraction. The story continues: "The city will collect a modest fee for licensing. Dutch brothel owners and prostitutes are required to declare income and pay taxes." Good. That they will have to pay taxes is reassuring evidence that at least some rules are still inviolable. Perhaps coincidentally, right beside that story is another one on Anne Frank and the courage of the Dutch in resisting Hitler's occupation. The people of the Netherlands were once noted for a solid, if sometimes stolid, morality, both public and personal. After a quarter-century of astonishingly rapid secularization and demoralization, the Dutch have turned into a nation of hustlers in human vice. Not incidentally, they lead the world in the cruelty and cowardice of involuntary euthanasia. It is not true that these developments in the Netherlands are beneath contempt.

■ Pat Buchanan has no connection with it, but an outfit called Cincinnatus PAC is sure that "Providence has raised him up" to be made President in 1996. Cincinnatus is a group of militant Catholic laymen who have been "rudely awakened to the reality that our public life is dominated by what amounts to an anti-Christian network spearheaded by powerful leftist Jewish organizations and members of the Masonic secret societies." The title of their magazine—which would seem to preempt our territory and that of most everybody else—is *All These Things*. FIRST THINGS seems embarrassingly inadequate by comparison. Nor does it seem likely that we would ever be able to publish an article like the one advertised in this mailing from Cincinnatus. It is called "Understanding the History of the World in 30 Minutes or Less." Our pedantry may be showing, but it seems to us that understanding the history of the world should take at least 30 minutes. We didn't send for the article.

■ The *Lee v. Weisman* ruling that outlawed prayers at public school graduation ceremonies is, in our judgment, deplorably wrongheaded on a number of scores. But we have some sympathy for the majority opinion's concern about the kind of vapid "civil religion" that such public invocations and benedictions tend to produce. It is, as John Murray Cuddihy brilliantly wrote in a book by that title, the religion of *No Offense*. We therefore have a grudging admiration for the Rev. Ronald Meyer of Parkway United Church in Minneapolis. Asked to invoke at the Minnesota Independent-Republican Party Convention, he snuck in the editorial comment, "If we declare government should not be in our pocketbook or pockets, we certainly don't think that government should be in the womb." Quickly jerked to attention, the delegates of the overwhelmingly pro-life convention booed, hissed, and shouted until a party officer hustled the Rev. Meyer from the stage without his having finished his "prayer." We wish he had given offense in a worthier cause, but we expect it is one of the few public invocations that will be remembered for some time.

■ In churches, as elsewhere, the road of evasion is paved with study committees. The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has again asked a study committee to determine whether Freemasonry is compatible with Christianity. The Catholic Church, Church of England, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Presbyterian Church in America, and Assemblies of God are among the bodies that have long answered that question in the negative. The reason it is such a hot potato in the SBC is that, according to a recent Baptist Press poll, 14 percent of SBC pastors and 18 percent of church deacon chairmen are or have been Masons.

■ Catholics for a Free Choice is an outfit based in Washington. It's not clear that it has any members,

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but it has a very vocal talking head on the tube, whose name, quite aptly, rhymes with Quisling. The purpose of CFC is to undermine Catholic teaching by advancing the claim that good Catholics can and should support abortion on demand. CFC is strongly and understandably supported by pro-abortion forces who find it a useful tool for promoting the kind of raw anti-Catholicism with which non-Catholics hesitate to be publicly associated. The Ford Foundation, for example, would likely be embarrassed to put its name on a campaign vilifying the putatively oppressive, sexist, patriarchal, medieval, and generally un-American institution that is the Catholic Church. But the Ford Foundation can give CFC the money to do its dirty work. And it does. The latest annual report from Ford indicates that it gave no less than $500,000 to CFC last year. CFC does no research, publishes no scholarly findings, provides no direct services. CFC, purely and simply, propagandizes against the Catholic Church in order to weaken its influence in the abortion debate. It is perhaps noteworthy that, still today, one of the largest and most prestigious philanthropies in the country apparently has no qualms in bankrolling one of the unloveliest bigotries in American life. All's fair in love and the culture wars, or so it seems.

■ The airwaves around Los Angeles are animated by a talk show run by Dennis Prager. (Can airwaves be animated? Why not?) He also publishes a quarterly of personal reflections called *Ultimate Issues*, and the current one reflects on the Los Angeles riots and what lessons others have drawn from that disaster. Mr. Prager thinks most commentators have failed to draw the obvious lesson that a lot of young and not-so-young people no longer know the difference between right and wrong. "I will only note here," he writes, "that we can easily assume that no church-going black torched any building or beat anyone in Los Angeles." Knowing as we do that the church is a community of sinners, we do not feel quite safe about that assumption. But Mr. Prager's further observations are perhaps on firmer ground: "For years on my radio show, I have posed one question to those who dismiss religion in America as morally irrelevant: 'Imagine it is midnight, and you are walking in a very bad area of the city. You are alone in a dark alley, and all of a sudden you notice that ten men are walking toward you. Would you or would you not be relieved to know that they had just attended a Bible class?' As a Jew and as an American, I greatly fear a post-Christian America. It is symbolized in American youths' lives by the difference between the Boy Scouts and Guns 'N' Roses. In black life, it is symbolized by the difference between Martin Luther King and Louis Farrakhan. Liberal activists yearn for a post-Christian America, but this Jew believes that in the Los Angeles riots we saw a preview of precisely what such an America will look like."

■ The United Church of Canada, with 800,000 members the country's largest Protestant denomination, was braced for big fights at this summer's convention. Should the church authorize same-sex unions? A fight was avoided by leaving it up to local congregations to do what they want. Then there was the big debate over the status of the Bible. Some wanted the UCC to say that it is "the" and others wanted to say it is "a" "foundational authority of faith." Peace was achieved, admittedly at the price of curious grammar, by dropping both articles and resolving that "The Bible is foundational authority as we seek to live the Christian life." The UCC is prepared to die for the principle that nothing is worth fighting over. And it is.

■ In an extended and fawning piece on Hillary Clinton, *Time* defends her against the charge of being indifferent to religion. "Hillary, a Methodist who claims to have been 'religiously committed since childhood,' carries her favorite Scriptures (*Proverbs, Psalms, Corinthians, Beatitudes*) wherever she goes." We would like to think that Mrs. Clinton did not give that list to the biblically illiterate editors of *Time*. On the other hand, maybe the Clinton theme of "time for a change" includes a new biblical canon.

■ There is the Vatican's International Liaison Committee. And then there is the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations. The groups have been getting together for almost twenty-five years and earlier this year met for the first time in the United States, at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore. The Jewish organization includes the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith, Synagogue Council of America, and the World Jewish Congress. At the Baltimore gathering the Catholics had a distinguished delegation of theologians and bishops, headed by Edward Cardinal Cassidy from Rome. On the Jewish side, however, some of the big names that were scheduled did not show, and some who did show left early. Father John Pawlikowski, a longstanding participant in Catholic-Jewish dialogues, observed, "On the Catholic side we're dealing with one organizing group, and [the Jewish coalition] is a very loose association of myriad members who have all sorts of different agendas for the dialogue, to put it mildly." Said Rabbi Leon Klenicki of the Anti-Defamation League, "I wouldn't be surprised if the Vatican leadership has second thoughts about a meeting of this kind in the future. And I cannot blame them."

■ The Marxists weren't good for much, but they did have these imaginative linguistic constructs for explaining away manifest contradictions. For

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instance, we have problems with the claim that hard-core conservatives are fascist and Nazi-like, but they also take such un-Nazi-like positions. For instance, here is an article in *The Arizona Republic* on how those rightwingers, especially Dan Quayle, are jockeying for 1996. It seems that Quayle has been introduced by Pat Robertson at a "God and country" rally, spoke at another rally organized by conservative talk-show host Rush Limbaugh, and was nothing less than the chief speaker at a fund-raiser for AIPAC, "a pro-Israel political action committee." The reporter adds in explanation, "Protection of Israel is a key concern of the far right." We don't know how a Marxist would explain it, but it looks to us like those Nazis are trying to confuse us by allying themselves with the Jews. Talk about devious.

■ *Chutzpah* is not a term ordinarily associated with Tennessee Baptists, but here is a long and rather fawning interview with Senator Albert Gore in *Christianity Today*, the mainline evangelical magazine. Gore opines, inter alia, that a "relatively small minority" in the pro-life movement thinks contraception is morally wrong, but they intimidate others in the movement. Pro-lifers, he says, should champion his cause of birth control in order to stabilize world population. It seems not to have struck the editors as a little odd that someone who switched to promoting abortion on demand should be giving advice to the pro-life movement. It is almost as odd as that magazine—which editorially asserts itself to be pro-life—puffing Al Gore a few weeks before the election. The interviewer did not even ask him about his position on abortion. Possibly that was a condition for his giving the interview. Possibly the issue did not occur to the editors. It is hard to decide which possibility raises the more serious questions about *Christianity Today*.

■ We have a more extended comment on Gore Vidal in the works. But some of the comments on his *Live From Golgotha* are not without interest. This is the book in which Vidal presents Paul as the founder of a gay cult in which the genitally well-endowed Timothy plays a key role. Jesus, of course, is the fraud who founded a religion of "the skygodders" that has displaced the infinitely superior paganism embraced by Mr. Vidal. Alfred Kazin ended his review in *The New Republic* by suggesting that it is past time for Vidal "to just shut up." What apparently offended Mr. Kazin, however, was that Vidal had made an unfair remark about one of Kazin's academic friends. Trashing Jesus and Christianity, it seems, is nothing to get upset about. A Random House advertisement for *Golgotha* quotes a *Newsweek* reviewer who said it was "bracingly blasphemous." One could hardly imagine Random House promoting a book as bracingly racist or bracingly sexist. Some sins are serious, and blasphemy is not among them. The same advertisement has another nice touch. The publishers obviously wanted a "banned in Boston" tag as testimony to the book's shock power. The best they could come up with was a statement by Bishop Michael Harty of Killaloe who said, "I will not read the book, and I will not spend money on it." Killaloe is in County Clare, Ireland. It strikes us that the publisher is desperately reaching to find evidence that Gore Vidal, at this late point in his decay, still has the capacity to outrage. Even the bishop of Killaloe sounds less outraged than uninterested.

■ If ever the public gets reliable access to the KGB files, there will of course be a great deal of interest in seeing who in the West was working in cahoots with the bad guys. The prospect of an honest opening of the files no doubt causes some sweaty palms also in national and international church circles. There is widespread worry, however, that files may be doctored, and some of them may have been lifted by former apparatchiks planning a comfortable retirement on blackmail. But information is already coming out through former Communist officials. It has been alleged, for instance, that I. F. Stone, he of leftist newsletter fame, was for many years a well-paid "Soviet agent of influence." In his last years, Stone wrote regularly for *The Nation* and the *New York Review of Books*. The prestige media fell all over themselves in eulogizing him when he died in 1989. The *New York Times* editorialized that he was "a gifted teacher, a meticulous craftsman, buttressing unfashionable views with relentless spadework. . . . He showed younger journalists how to develop stories without kowtowing to the powerful." During the Vietnam war years, church activists hailed Stone as a "prophetic voice in the wilderness." He may have been, it now appears, a hired shill amply rewarded by the other side. The much-publicized accusations against Stone have provoked heated denials from his friends. In his case, as in others, we may never know the full story. That celebrated journalistic figures may turn out to have been corrupt to the core is of no little importance. Of greater significance is the determined refusal of intellectual and religious elites to face up to the moral implications of collaboration with the bloodiest tyranny in human history. We do not have in mind those who criticized U.S. policies and thereby gave inadvertent "aid and comfort" to the enemy. We mean, rather, those who concluded that the U.S. was on the wrong side of the global revolution. By psychological disposition or active collusion, they went over to the other side. Few became paid agents; many became, in the jargon of the Soviets, "useful idiots." All have good reason to hope that the files have been lost or destroyed.

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■ We didn't ask Paul Mankowski to cover the American Academy of Religion meeting this year (see his "What I Saw at the American Academy of Religion," *FT*, March, and "Academic Religion: Playground of the Vandals," *FT*, May). While, admittedly, some serious work also gets addressed, the goings-on at the AAR beggar parody, and too rich a diet of honest reportage on intellectual vandalism can turn readers jaded. This year's meeting is in San Francisco, appropriately enough, and the big opening address that aims at setting the tone is by Mary Daly of Boston College, also appropriately enough. Daly caught attention in the early seventies with books such as *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, and has more recently published *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy* and *Webster's First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language*, which is described as being "conjured in cahoots with Jane Caputi." Daly's enthusiasms for the joys of tough lesbianism and witchcraft are not intended for male consumption. She has a longstanding policy of not admitting men to her classes at Boston College, but apparently an exception will be made for the opening session of the AAR. Some readers may wonder what Mary Daly is doing at Boston College, which is, after all, a Catholic school of sorts. We are informed that the college figures it would be an enormous legal and institutional hassle to fire her, so they've worked out an arrangement whereby she doesn't teach very much and they pretend that she's not around. The title of her AAR address is "Metapatriarchal Adventures and Ecstatic Travels." We do not know whether the ecstasy in question has any connection with that described by Andrew Sullivan in *The New Republic* (see item above).

■ When it works so well, do it again. So there will be a second two-week seminar on "The Free Society and *Centesimus Annus*" in Lichtenstein next July. The same faculty: Rocco Buttiglione, Michael Novak, Richard John Neuhaus, George Weigel. Fellowships are available for ten American graduate students. Send curriculum vitae and 300-word essay on liberty to Derek Cross, Americam Enterprise Institute, 1150 Seventeenth Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. Application deadline is February 1, 1993.

■ **Errata:** Because of a production error, the contents of the November Public Square were considerably scrambled. Page 75 was printed twice, once in its proper place and once, incorrectly, as page 71. In the process, the materials that should have appeared on page 71 disappeared into editorial limbo. In addition to the lost items, two others appeared in incomplete form. We reprint them in full below.

■ Addressing a conference on the Human Genome Project held in Houston, John Habgood, the Church of England's Archbishop of York, warned against exaggerating the genetic determination of personal human characteristics. "The fact that we share 98 percent of our genes with chimpanzees does not mean that there is only a 2 percent difference between being chimpanzee and being human," he observed. One of the most striking characteristics of human life is its open-endedness, he said. "All of us live, whether we believe it intellectually or not, as if we were free to create our own future." As to whether a person should be told of his genetic abnormalities, Dr. Habgood suggested that "it is probably wisest to know the best or worst about one's genes, provided the information can be properly interpreted, and provided there is a proper recognition of the inherent limitations of this knowledge." Those told that they are subject to genetic risks "need to be aware of the danger of spreading an unnecessay blight over their lives. . . . There is also the danger of being seized by a belief in genetic determination which then becomes self-fulfilling. . . . One of the trickiest aspects of genetic counseling must be in knowing how to balance an awareness of statistical probabilities against . . . the open-endedness of human nature, the personal resources for coping with an unlucky inheritance." On the subject of pre-natal screening, when abortion is the only "treatment" proposed, Dr. Habgood warned that, "given the increasing ability to diagnose major abnormalities at a very early stage, the minority who continue to be born with severe genetically based disablements will find themselves even more disadvantaged by the unspoken assumption that they ought not to have slipped through the net." Dr. Habgood's understated warning, it is to be feared, comes rather late. The birth of the severely handicapped is already viewed by many as the imposition of an unnecessary burden upon society. As our colleague Christopher Lasch wrote some while back, there is also social significance in the disappearance of "freak shows" in our culture. We tell ourselves that we are too sensitive to view abnormalities as entertainment, and there is no doubt something to that. Lasch suggests that it may be equally true that our clean, healthy, rational world has no place for freaks. They ought to have been "treated" so as to prevent their imposing themselves upon our delicate sensibilities.

■ According to Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding (EMEU), support for Israel is declining among evangelical Protestants in this country. They cite a survey of readers conducted by *Christianity Today* in which 39 percent say that their stance toward Israel has become "more critical." While a majority of readers agree that Israel holds a special place in the future of God's kingdom, only 24 percent agree that "the biblical mandate is for Christians to support the state of Israel." Reasons given for the declining support include efforts by

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EMEU and others to foster closer relations between Palestinian Christians and religious leaders here. It is also noted that there is a decline in "dispensational" theology, which emphasizes the restoration of Israel as a condition for the coming of the End Time. Others say that there is a new "progressive dispensationalism" emerging that is less "land-centered" and "future-centered" than earlier dispensationalisms. An additional factor, it is reasonable to think, is a correlation between evangelical and more general public opinion that has tended to side with the Bush administration's harder line on questions such as Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. Despite the purported decline, evangelical Protestantism continues to provide what may be the single most important non-Jewish source of support for Israel in this country.

Sources: Margaret Steinfels on prophecy, *Origins*, September 17, 1992. On WCC Central Committee, Ecumenical Press Service, August 31, 1992. Richard McBrien on redefining the center, *America*, August 22, 1992. Comments on the British monarchy, *New York Times*, September 27, 1992. Andrew Sullivan on homosexuality in *The New Republic*, September 28, 1992. On "New World Order" consultation, Ecumenical Press Service, June 16, 1992. On the ACLU and Christmas evictions, *New York Times*, December 25, 1991. John Frohnmayer quoted in Martin E. Marty's *Context*, July 1, 1992. On prostitution in the Netherlands, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, June 14, 1992. Invocation by Rev. Ronald Meyer, cited in *National and International Religion Report*, June 29, 1992. On Southern Baptists and Freemasonry, *National and International Religion Report*, June 29, 1992. On dispute in United Church of Canada, *National and International Religion Report*, September 7, 1992. *Time* on Hillary Clinton, September 14, 1992. On one-sided participation in Catholic-Jewish conferences, *The Jewish Week*, May 15-21, 1992. On "far right" support for Israel, *The Arizona Republic*, August 22, 1992. Albert Gore on contraception and the pro-life movement, *Christianity Today*, September 14, 1992. Alfred Kazin on Gore Vidal, *The New Republic*, October 5, 1992. On I. F. Stone, Ray Kerrison in the *New York Post*, July 10, 1992. On the Human Genome Project, *The Tablet*, 4 April 1992. On declining Evangelical support for Israel, *Religion Watch*, April 1992.

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In the October 1992 issue (Vol. 3, No. 4), **Ghia Nodia** of the Institute of Philosophy in Tbilisi, Georgia, disputes the popular Western view that "democracy and nationalism are mutually hostile." His essay **"NATIONALISM AND DEMOCRACY"** makes the provocative case that "the idea of nationalism is impossible—indeed unthinkable—without the idea of democracy," and that "democracy never exists without nationalism." Following Nodia's essay are comments by **Francis Fukuyama** and **Shlomo Avineri.**

Also featured in this issue:

The Islamist Challenge
Religion and Modernity in Algeria, *Lahouari Addi*
The Failure of Reform in Tunisia, *Mark J. Gasiorowski*
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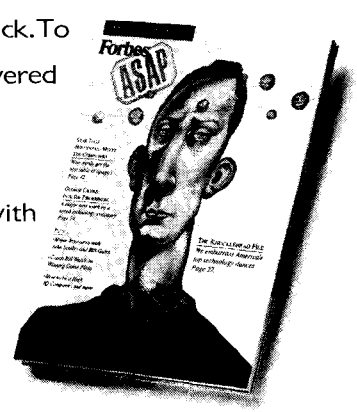

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